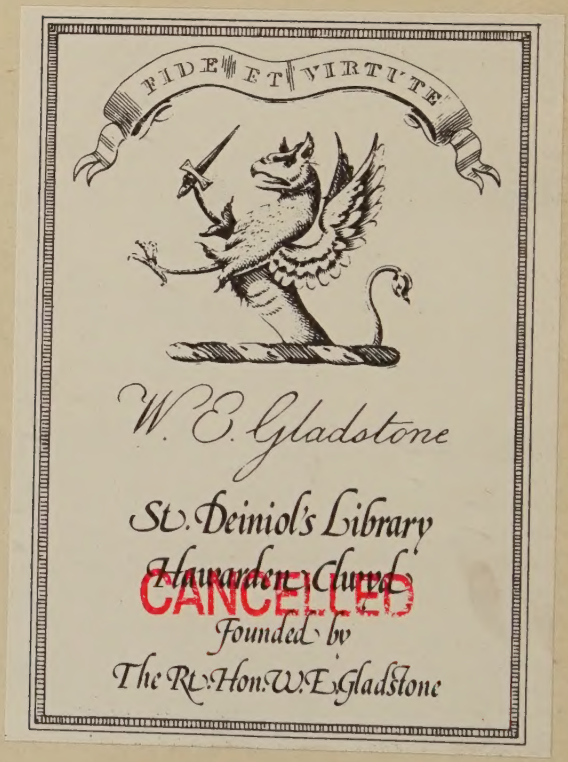
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Atonement

THE PROBLEM OF THE CROSS

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THE PROBLEM OF THE CROSS

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PREFACE

I HAVE expanded in this volume some lectures which I gave in the Diocese of Winchester in the winter of 1917–18 under the auspices of the Diocesan Society for the Promotion of Higher Religious Education. I claim no originality for the book, but the ideas which I have gathered from others I have tried to make a living part of my own thought. I hope that I have sufficiently acknowledged in the footnotes my debt to the authors whose works I have consulted. I am under a particular obligation to the writings of the late Professor Denney, and to J. K. Mozley's *The Doctrine of the Atonement,* a book replete with historical knowledge, and luminous in its exposition of the various theories of the Cross.

We stand on the threshold of a period of theological reconstruction, when fresh interpretation will be given to many old beliefs. The hour is more than ripe for such revision and recasting, which has indeed been going on for some time past in the general mind. I cannot help thinking that in the new epoch which is dawning increased emphasis will be given to the doctrine of the

Atonement in the scheme of Christian theology. I have tried in these lectures to indicate the form which I think our interpretation of the Cross will take. We shall make central the thought that God suffers with His universe. One of the most urgent needs for theology at this moment is to think out the relation between the twin conceptions of Transcendence and Immanence. The Cross of Christ certainly wins a new significance when set against the background of the divine immanence. But the Cross was no defeat, but a triumph. That is the cardinal message of Christianity. Hence the conception of a God who suffers with His world must be shown to be compatible with the conception of a God who in suffering is transcendently victorious; otherwise the Cross spells weakness instead of power.

I have published these lectures, which deal in a popular way with the difficulties men are feeling about the Atonement, in the hope that some who read them may be helped to understand better something of the largeness of the problem, and perhaps to find the outlines of a solution which is in harmony with the general movement of thought to-day.

V. F. S.

Bentley Rectory,
October 1918.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE CROSS

CHAPTER I

THE METHOD OF APPROACH

At the outset of any enquiry into the doctrine of the Atonement it is essential that we should try to define our method of approach. The same truth presents a very different aspect according to the angle from which we regard it. Not a few of the difficulties which men have felt in connexion with Christ's death upon the Cross are, I believe, due to the fact that they have either treated that death in isolation from the rest of Christian doctrine, or have never liberated their minds from the prejudices which certain limited presentations of the doctrine have naturally produced. I have tried, therefore, in this introductory chapter to lay down certain general principles and considerations which must be kept in view if we are to make the Atonement mean anything vital or satisfying to ourselves. Dogma is one thing; living

doctrine is another. What should be the latter is too often merely the former, because the enquirer has never made clear to himself the presuppositions which underlie his investigation.

1. We must begin by emphasizing the fact that speculation alone will never solve the problem of the Atonement. Christ's words that, if a man would be assured of the truth of His teaching, he must do it,[1] while they are true of all the doctrines of Christianity, are specially true of the Atonement. Speculation, by itself, will never reveal to us the heart of the mystery. The truth contained in the Cross must be lived out if it is to be appreciated. He who has a cross in his own life can alone hope to find a meaning in the Cross on Calvary. S. Paul, even in his most speculative moments, never loses sight of the fact that the path of the Christian is a *via crucis*. Where he is most argumentative in relation to this doctrine his logic reposes on a basis of practical conduct. His only ground for venturing to theorize about the Cross is that he is being crucified with Christ in his daily life. The Atonement, for him, is a fact of present, living experience.

2. But practical conduct is no substitute for theory, nor does it provide a ready-made solution of intellectual difficulties. If we are to serve God with the mind as well as with the heart, we have to do some hard thinking. But we

[1] S. John vii. 17.

must be prepared to find that our profoundest speculations carry us but a little way into our problem. Much will remain which will baffle us. Who, for instance, could be presumptuous enough to assume that he had fathomed the meaning of the Atonement on its Godward side? Or who will dare to say that he has understood the full significance of the cry of Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"?

So stupendous is the fact of Christ's death, as it is presented in Christian theology, that our finite minds can never grasp more than a fragment of its meaning. Something, however, we can grasp, and the truth which we grasp will grow on us as experience ripens. I know no doctrine of Christianity of which it is more true that years bring wisdom, always provided that the growing years are consecrated by a loyal endeavour to follow Christ's example and standards. Let no one, then, expect from a theory of the Atonement a solution of all his difficulties. Any theory will probably raise more problems than it explains. Yet some theories are more adequate than others, and our endeavour must be to find a theory which presents the fewest difficulties, and harmonizes best with the sum of Christian doctrine and the widening experience of the human spirit in its search for truth.

3. The Atonement, as I have already hinted, must not be isolated from the rest of Christian

theology or from the whole life and work of Christ. The difficulties under which some theories of the Atonement labour are due to the fact that they treat the Cross as if it stood by itself. But the death of Christ must be taken in connexion with His entire career of service and self-sacrifice of which it was the culminating act, and not least with His Resurrection, Ascension, and bestowal of the Spirit. The Resurrection and Ascension crowned the work of reconciliation effected on the Cross; and Pentecost was the beginning of the continuous process by which the fruits of the Atonement were made available for men. Only through the vitalizing influence of the Spirit, taking of the things of Christ and making them plain to us, can the Atonement be made living in our own experience. We must be led by the Spirit if we are to take up our cross and die to sin.

Similarly, though forgiveness may be regarded as the special gift of the Atonement, the experience of forgiveness must not be divorced from Christian experience as a whole. Man is a unity, and we cannot treat in isolation any of his religious experiences without doing them an injustice. Forgiveness is often treated as if it had relation only to the past, and was concerned merely with the removal of a burden of guilt. But a forgiveness which is real is concerned equally with the future. The meaning of the divine pardon for the repentant sinner is to be

found in the assurance that God still trusts him, still has work for him to do, so that in the coming years he may look forward to the establishment of fresh relationships with his Father. Forgiveness and sanctification go hand in hand. An experience of forgiveness which does not result in growing holiness is morally worthless.

4. The Bible must be our guide as we study this doctrine. Who can hope to understand the death of Christ unless he first makes himself acquainted with the mind of S. Paul, S. Peter, and S. John, and above all with our Lord's own teaching about His Cross? We shall see how central in the New Testament is the place occupied by the Atonement, and how, almost without exception, the apostolic writers give it the foremost position in their theology. To discuss it without constant reference to their interpretations of it can lead to no satisfying results. Apart from their guidance we may indeed construct some speculative theory, but we shall find that our theory will be out of vital relation to the facts of Christian experience.

It is important, on the other hand, to remember two things. First, a harmony must be established between biblical statements and our own moral consciousness. We can accept no doctrine of the Atonement which offends our moral sense. Nothing in the Bible is exempt from that reverent criticism which seeks to discover the spirit behind the letter, and to

disentangle essential meaning from the form in which it is presented. As we study what the New Testament has to say upon this matter we shall see how varied is its doctrinal colouring. The writers knew well that they were face to face with an act of God so marvellous that no interpretation of it could be adequate. In the second place, we must be constantly reminding ourselves that the theology of any age inevitably reflects the general mind of the age. What else could S. Paul do than present the doctrine of the Atonement in terms of the thought of his own generation? Had he lived to-day he would have written very differently, for his whole intellectual outlook would have been different. The fact of the Cross would have been the same; the same, too, would have been the experience generated by the fact, the power of the Cross in daily life; but the speculative rendering of the fact would have reflected the mind of the twentieth century. Here, again, criticism of biblical theology is incumbent on us if the past is to live on in the present. But let us beware of that temper of scornful impatience which rejects wholesale a doctrinal statement because its form belongs to intellectual conditions which we have outgrown.

5. Not many years ago it was a commonplace of criticism to say that S. Paul was the creator of Christian theology, and in particular of the theology of the Atonement; indeed, such criticism

is not altogether extinct to-day. I shall have something to say on this point when we discuss the Pauline teaching. Meanwhile, let us ask what such criticism implies. Is it not this, that any theorizing about the Atonement is to be deprecated? "Why theorize?" asks the objector; "why seek to explain the Cross? Cannot you rest content with the bare fact that Christ died for our sins? Has not the fact power; has it not proved its power in the lives of the most unlettered, who are incapable of speculating?"

Possibly we do grow weary of the conflict of theories which seem to advance us no farther on our road, and in this particular instance feel that the fact is so big that no theory can hope to compass it. And in some mood of impatience or intellectual despair we are tempted to abandon the endeavour to understand it. But let us ask ourselves whether it is really possible to treat the Cross of Christ as a bare fact. Is a bare fact anything at all? Must not every fact be so far interpreted that it is brought into connexion with the knowledge already existing in our minds? A bare fact is an unrelated fact; and an unrelated fact, standing by itself, has no meaning for us. Hence our minds must, by the law of their own being, seek to form some explanation of the Cross. Some interpretation, some theory, however crude and incomplete, we must have. The late Professor Denney offered

some penetrating criticism of this supposed distinction between fact and theory. In *The Death of Christ* he wrote :

> In all probability this also is a distinction which it will not repay us to discuss *in vacuo* : everything depends on the kind of fact which we are supposed to be theorizing. The higher we rise in the scale of reality, the more evanescent becomes the distinction between the thing " itself " and the theory of it. A fact like the one with which we are here concerned, a fact in which the character of God is revealed, and in which an appeal is to be made to the reason, the conscience, the heart, the whole moral being of man, is a fact which must be, and must be seen to be, full of rational, ethical, and emotional content. If instead of " theory " we use an equivalent word, say " meaning," we discover that the absolute distinction disappears. The fact is not known to us at all unless it is known in its meaning, in that which constitutes it a revelation of God and an appeal to man ; and to say that we know it in its meaning is to say that we know it theoretically, or in and through a theory of it. A fact of which there is no theory is a fact in which we can see no meaning.[1]

There is, then, no valid ground for criticizing the writers of the New Testament because they always, along with the fact of the Atonement, offer some interpretation of it, because they insist that the fact is connected with a divine

[1] pp. 119, 120.

purpose for the world, and is intimately related to Christian experience and growth in character. If the Atonement is central in Christianity it is one of the foundation-facts of our religion. Can we be content to leave a fact of that overwhelming import unexplained, or to rest in some vague sentimental appreciation of it without pressing on to give it a theological or metaphysical interpretation? Christian theology did not come into being because the human intellect loves to spin speculative cobwebs. It arose because of certain happenings in history, and of certain religious experiences which came to the first Christians. It is just the attempt to explain those facts and those experiences. The facts and the experiences remain, and the twentieth century, equally with the first, is confronted with the task of interpreting them. Our hope is that later ages, profiting by the work of earlier thinkers, and guided into new truths by the Spirit of Truth, may reach a theology of the Atonement which shall be more adequate and satisfying. But there is no finality in the interpretative process. Out of older theologies new ones are ever being born. To so lofty and stimulating a quest for truth does the God of truth summon us.

6. The determining factor in any theory of the Atonement which we may frame must be our thought of God. The death of Christ was His action in history. Hence it must be construed

in relation to all that we know of Him, His character, purposes, and essential being. The Atonement can have nothing arbitrary about it ; we cannot treat it as something which God enacted, as it were, on the spur of the moment, a desperate remedy to set right a world which was fast going to ruin. Whatever it means, it must express the permanent mind and nature of God ; and according to our thought of God so will be our theory of the Atonement. It is important to insist on this, because, as I shall show later, the modern mind of to-day emphasizes the thought of the divine *Fatherhood* and of the *immanence* of God, or His nearness to His universe. Now if you put in the forefront of your thinking about God these two conceptions of Fatherhood and nearness, you will reach a theory of the Atonement very different from some of the theories which obtained when other views of God were prominent. The theology of any age, as we have already seen, is coloured by the general thought of the age.

It may be worth while to illustrate this variety in men's thinking upon the Atonement. In the age of the Fathers theories of the Cross were frequently couched in the language of ransom. Christ ransomed men from sin, or from the devil, who was holding the human race captive. That was a period of constant war. Captivity was the lot of many, and ransom from captivity was a common thing. The Middle

Ages were the ages of chivalry, crusades, knighthood. Now in Anselm's theory of the Atonement you find Christ's death treated as a homage or satisfaction paid to the violated honour of God. The idea of honour was in the air. It is reflected in the theology of the period. After the Reformation you have the age of absolute monarchy, the divine right of kings, and the like. The king's will was law; he was the fount of law and authority. In this period there is a tendency to interpret the Atonement forensically, in terms of law and the law-court. God is supreme Lawgiver and Judge. Sin is treason against His authority. Justice, therefore, demands the death of the sinner, or of some substitute for the sinner.[1] To-day our thought is of evolution, of a God progressively revealing Himself and near at hand, working out a great purpose of love in nature and humanity. Striving, advance through pain and struggle, a distant goal towards which with blood and tears we slowly progress—that is our kind of outlook. Thus it comes about that in our modern theories of the Atonement, we think of God as suffering with His world. The Father shares in the interests and life of His children. He stoops to redeem them by entering into all the sorrows and vicissitudes of their lot. Against such a background the Cross wins a new significance.

[1] I am indebted to a sketch on these lines which appeared in *The British Weekly* at the close of 1917 by Dr. David Smith.

These are merely illustrations. They must not be over-pressed, as though you could thus easily group under such heads the various theories of the Atonement. But they are illustrations not without value in two respects. First, they show how theological construction is influenced by the general outlook and thought of any age. Secondly, they make it clear that it is the conception of God which prevails at any period which mainly determines that period's estimate of the Atonement. The illustrations serve also to remind us of the important truth, on which I have already insisted, that, unless theology seeks to adjust itself to the living thought of the age and speaks in modern language, it will become dead and barren. The wise householder of the parable brought out of his treasury things new and old. Let us retain whatever in the old is vital and essential, but let us so present it that it is living for the men of this generation. Some one has described many of our sermons as "dried tongues," with no power to quicken. It may be that the preacher has no message of life to give. It may be also that he has not kept abreast of modern ways of thinking, and so preaches in an ancient language, which inevitably fails to go home to the hearer's heart.

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Brief summaries of teaching upon difficult and complicated subjects are often misleading, and I am well aware that it is impossible in a page or two to give any adequate idea of what the New Testament writers have to say upon the Cross of Christ. I make, therefore, no pretence that I am exhausting the subject in what follows. My aim is a simpler one: to show how central is the Cross in the apostolic teaching, and how it is everywhere regarded as an Atonement for human sin wrought by God Himself. In addition, I am specially anxious to show that S. Paul is not to be regarded as the inventor of the theology of the Cross, but that what he and the other writers had to say about it had its origin in the teaching of Jesus.

1. *The Teaching of Jesus.*—Let us begin with this. What requires to be emphasized is the fact that, from the very beginning of His ministry, the thought of His death and the meaning of it were present to the consciousness of Christ. We have abandoned the position of an earlier

criticism which divided the life of Jesus into two periods ; one, the Galilean springtime of sunny confidence, when Jesus was sure that He would rapidly establish His kingdom and win a triumphant success ; the other, the later period, when He became aware that His foes would compass His death. The facts are against such a theory ; which, indeed, in any case we should hesitate to accept, because it implies that Jesus, when He began His mission, did not understand its true purport. I am not saying that our Lord did not grow in comprehension of His mission, that He did not read a fuller meaning in the Cross as it drew near. I think it certain that He did. But from the very outset, at His Baptism, He knew that He must die and understood why He must do so. He had come to die for the sins of men.

(*a*) *The Baptism.*—It is probable that He came then to the full consciousness of His Sonship. But what did the Sonship involve ? The voice from heaven at the Baptism, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," whether heard with the outward or inward ear, uses Old Testament words. Jesus, as we know, had carefully studied the Old Testament ; psalm and prophecy were familiar to Him. Now these words refer us to Psalm ii. 7 and Isaiah xlii. 1. The Psalm says : " Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The prophecy runs : " Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; my chosen, in whom

my soul delighteth." Sonship and Servantship went together. The Son was to play the part of the Servant. And what was the rôle of the Servant as described in Second Isaiah? He was to suffer, and by suffering to redeem his people. Isaiah liii. gives a picture of the Suffering Servant's work. Jesus must have often pondered over the portrait of the Servant drawn by Isaiah. May we not reasonably conclude that, when the voice came to Him at His Baptism, He realized that in some manner (the exact manner may not yet have been clear) He was to suffer and make atonement for the people? Could He have been the Servant unless suffering and death were to be His lot?[1]

We read (S. Mark i. 4): "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." This baptism had to do with sin and the cleansing from sin. Why was Jesus baptized by S. John? Not because He needed any cleansing Himself, but that He might identify Himself with the people for whom He was later to make atonement, and that He might call their attention to the fact that sin was a reality, and that they required purification from it. As Denney points

[1] I have to acknowledge a profound debt to the late Professor Denney's *The Death of Christ*. Even those who are not ready to accept Denney's interpretation of the Atonement will admit that he has collected the evidence which the New Testament gives about the Cross in a masterly fashion. He has for ever made it clear that the Cross is central in Christianity.

out, the prophecy of the Servant provides us with the clue: "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah liii. 12); words which Jesus expressly applied to Himself on the eve of the Crucifixion (*cf.* S. Luke xxii. 37). By submitting to the rite of Baptism Jesus not only reinforced the Baptist's teaching about repentance as the condition of entering the Kingdom, but at the very outset of His ministry proclaimed His intention of sharing completely all the experiences of His human brethren. The Cross throws its light back upon the Baptism, and justifies us in maintaining that the significance of the death which He was to die was present to the mind of Jesus from the first.

(*b*) *The Temptation.*—Can this be satisfactorily explained except on the hypothesis that the inner struggle of soul was concerned with the choice to be made between two lines of action? Should He seek to win His Kingdom by popular and worldly methods, or should He take the other road which inevitably involved suffering and death? If He was to be the Servant there could be no doubt about the answer. It was with open eyes, and with a clear consciousness of what it implied, that He rejected the temptation to follow the easier path. Death awaited Him; He must have realized that. Only through suffering could He prove Himself a Redeemer; only by harbouring no taint of sin in His own life could He effect for humanity

that atonement for sin which He came to effect. Once again, the story of Gethsemane, with its temptation to put away the cup of suffering, illuminates the record of the spiritual struggle in the wilderness. Gethsemane finds its meaning only in connexion with the burden of sin, and the same is true of the Temptation. Upon both experiences the Cross casts its shadow.

(*c*) *The Confession of S. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi.*—"Thou art the Christ," said S. Peter, and received his Master's commendation. What follows? We read, "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed" (S. Matthew xvi. 21). He had spoken of His death before, but from now onwards He emphasizes its necessity and frequently recurs to the subject. Some have maintained that the necessity which He saw in it was due to the fact that He now perceived that His enemies were determined to kill Him. But does that explain the importance which He attached to the matter? Surely the true explanation of the necessity was grasped by S. Peter, when in his speech at Pentecost he said, "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts ii. 23). The necessity for the death lay in the eternal counsels of God. It was God's purpose that He should

die for the race. The Lamb had been slain "from the foundation of the world." The death was morally necessary, if the redemption of humanity was to be achieved. That the disciples failed to understand what Jesus meant, and, when the Crucifixion had taken place, were in despair, is not altogether surprising. Their conception of Messiahship moved along the level of popular thought. A Messiahship involving suffering and death was something so strange that they could not comprehend it; but after the Resurrection the meaning of their Master's earlier utterances became clear. To estimate any life and its purpose you must view it as whole. To judge of the meaning of a development you must interpret the beginning in the light of the end. View Christ's life as a whole, see it crowned by the Resurrection and Ascension, and you cannot but attribute a moral necessity to the death. Nor can you fairly maintain that the apostles read into the death, in the light of their later experiences, a meaning which was not present to the mind of Jesus. A study of His consciousness forbids such an explanation. He was never in doubt about the purport of His mission. His sense of His unique Sonship carried with it the clear insight into His Father's will. "When He unfolds Messiahship it contains death." [1]

(*d*) *Christ's Explanation of the Purpose of His*

[1] Denney, *op. cit.* p. 32.

Death.—We come now to the famous words, "For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (S. Mark x. 45). We have here an interpretation of the death, an explanation of its necessity. What do the words mean? They have been very variously expounded.[1] Many critics have sought to explain away their significance, seeing in them nothing more than an assertion that many, who had not been won to repentance by the life and teaching of Jesus, would be won by His death; or a statement that the death was to be the culminating example of the self-sacrifice which had throughout characterized the life. But let us take the words as they stand, and ask what they mean on a plain and natural interpretation of them. The key-word is the word "ransom," and it takes us back to those utterances of Jesus in which He had spoken of a man losing and saving his life. Lives could be lost or forfeited, so Jesus taught. "For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?" (S. Mark viii. 36, 37). As Mozley puts it:

Neither for another nor for himself can a man provide what will be accepted in exchange. But this is exactly what Jesus claims to be able

[1] For a short summary of the various views *cf.* J. K. Mozley's *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, pp. 46–50.

to do and says He has come to do. He brings His own life as a λύτρον, that is, in the sense of the corresponding Hebrew word, a covering, and so a satisfaction or ransom for many. He ends His life of service by an act of sacrifice, which has, as its purpose and effect, the liberation of the forfeited lives of many. What is presented to us is not indeed a theory of atonement, but a perfectly definite statement that, apart from what Jesus does, lives would still be forfeit, and that what He does is to die.[1]

Men have forfeited their lives by sin. Jesus claims that by His death for sin He can restore what men have lost. The theological interpretation of His statement we shall consider later. All that concerns us here is to note that Jesus had plainly in mind the thought that He was to give His life as a sacrifice for sinful humanity.

(*e*) *The Last Supper.*—It is unnecessary for our present purpose to discuss at any length the problems connected with the Last Supper. One thing is clear. Unless we are prepared to throw over the testimony of the New Testament and of the Christian Church, we must accept the statement that the Supper had reference to the death of Jesus. All the narratives connect it with the shedding of the blood, and all introduce the word "covenant." "This is my blood of the covenant" (S. Mark xiv. 24). "This is my blood of the [*new* R.V. marg.]

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 46–7.

covenant" (S. Matthew xxvi. 28). "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (S. Luke xxii. 20). We are taken back to the Old Testament, which teaches that covenant blood is sacrificial blood, and is held to have atoning or propitiating power. "What it concerns us to note is that the New Testament, while it abstains from interpreting Christ's death by any special prescriptions of the Levitical law, constantly uses sacrificial language to describe that death, and in doing so unequivocally recognizes in it a propitiatory character—in other words, a reference to sin and its forgiveness." [1]

And we may surely assume that Jesus had in mind the great promise in Jeremiah (xxxi. 31–4): "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." What was it which Jesus was to do? He was to restore the broken relation between man and God, to procure forgiveness of sin, and so establish new ties of fellowship between them. The foundation of this new covenant was the forgiveness of the sin which was the fatal barrier between earth and heaven, and the forgiveness was to be mediated through the death which He was to die.

Before we pass on to deal with S. Paul's

[1] Denney, *op. cit.* p. 54.

teaching it may be well to say something on three matters which are vitally connected with our enquiry into the mind of Jesus.

First, the estimate which we take of sin must affect our view of the teaching of Jesus about the Cross. If sin means little to us, or if we are prepared to treat it merely as a taint of blood, an hereditary burden which every member of the race has involuntarily to carry, we shall naturally be disposed to minimize the significance of our Lord's utterances about the Cross. But who, if he is honest with himself and true to the deliverances of his own moral consciousness, can treat sin lightly, or refuse to see in it a defect of will? There is a vast difference between disposition and character, between a tendency and an actualizing of that tendency in concrete act. We inherit dispositions and tendencies; they are the raw material out of which character is made. But character is what we make for ourselves by our free choice. We can either reinforce a sinful tendency and convert it into sin proper, or we can resist it and suppress it. Sin is a reality, whose roots are in our will. Freedom is a reality, even though it may be impossible to demonstrate logically its existence. And the fundamental problem of religion is the problem of the relation of sinful man to a holy God. Christianity contains, as the core of its message, a revelation about sin, its significance, and its removal. Deny the fact

of sin, and you not only do violence to the deepest moral consciousness of the race, but you empty Christianity of more than half its meaning.

The second point also is concerned with the presuppositions of our enquiry. Just as our appreciation of the Cross depends upon the view we take of sin, so does our whole attitude towards the Atonement depend upon our answer to the question " What think ye of Christ ? " If Christ was only man, then we may join hands with the critics who seek to minimize the significance of His death. But if the orthodox interpretation of His Person is correct, then we cannot but read into His utterances about the Cross the deepest meaning which they will bear. And this, not only because " he spake with authority," but because of the whole significance which His Person and work bear in our estimate of the meaning of human history and the scheme of the universe. Our interpretation of the Cross cannot be divorced from our interpretation of the Person who died upon it.

Thirdly, we have to meet the frequently repeated objection that there was no necessity for an atoning death because the forgiveness of sins is represented in the Gospels as the free gift of God. In the parable of the Prodigal Son his father offers a free pardon to the returning exile. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant the lord freely forgives the debtor. Must not God, we are asked, just because He is Love,

freely pardon any of His children who repent? Why must forgiveness be mediated through the Cross? The answer to this objection will become clearer later on in this volume. Meanwhile we may here say this: The fact that Christ had to die upon the Cross does not make the love of God less free. God's free and boundless love is shown in the way in which He dealt with sin by freely giving His Son to die for it. It is through the Cross we best appreciate the love of God, and the New Testament always pictures the Cross as flowing from God's love. As Denney points out, those who admit the fact of the Incarnation have already accepted the principle of mediation; and atonement or propitiation is only one form of mediation. While, as for the parable of the Prodigal Son, if there is no Atonement in it, neither is there any Christ seeking to redeem the lost. The parable illustrates the freeness of the divine forgiveness. It is not concerned with the cost at which that forgiveness is granted. But it is the cost which is the problem.[1]

2. *The Teaching of S. Paul.*—A few preliminary considerations must first occupy our attention. There is still a tendency in some quarters to assert that S. Paul is the real creator of Christian theology; and in particular that he invented a doctrine of the Atonement which has no basis in our Lord's teaching. Paul or Jesus—such is

[1] *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, pp. 14–15.

the alternative offered for our acceptance. Now, if we assume the validity of the alternative, it will only demonstrate the great importance which S. Paul attached to the Cross, how the death of Christ is central in all his teaching, and will compel us to ask why the apostle found such significance in Calvary. And that enquiry will lead us to see that it was no mere speculative dogma which he defends, but a truth of living experience ; that, for the apostle, the Cross spelt new life and hope and a spring of moral inspiration. But, in point of fact, the proffered alternative has no validity. S. Paul would have been immensely surprised had you told him he was an innovator and was inventing a new theology. He tells us expressly, " I delivered unto you, first of all, that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures " (1 Cor. xv. 3). What he taught he had received from others. Is it conceivable that, if he had been inventing a new doctrine, no word of protest or questioning should have reached us ? But of these there is no trace. On the contrary, in writing to his converts, S. Paul assumes that he and they share a common faith in this matter. And, as Mozley points out, in his controversy with the Judaizers he never accuses his opponents of denying that Christ's death has a saving significance. They agreed with him about this. What he does accuse them of is insisting upon

the importance of practices as needful for salvation which really do away with the unique value of the Cross. "That is why his argument is so powerful; but it would not have been powerful at all if the Judaizers could have appealed to S. Peter and others against the novelty of his doctrine of the Cross."[1]

Unquestionably S. Paul developed the theology of the Atonement, and brought out the fuller meaning of what was germinal and implicit in the words of Christ, or in the simpler doctrine of the Church in the earliest days as that is recorded for us in the speeches in the Book of Acts. The very fact that he was engaged in controversy and had to defend his views necessitated such an expansion of the teaching. All the formal doctrines of the Church took their present form under the stress of heretical attack. But this is not innovation. It is merely the presentation of old truth to meet new circumstances, and the unfolding of its richness under the teaching of a growing experience. Every writer, again, has his own individual outlook, the result of his special circumstances of training and heredity. S. Paul's individuality is marked; he writes in his own way and with his own emphasis. He no doubt emphasizes aspects of the Atonement which had not been emphasized before, but this does not justify us in calling him an inventor. S. Paul himself certainly had no other aim than

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 65.

that of defending the common Christian traditions, and of showing that in the Cross was to be found a regenerative power for the every-day life of duty and service.

This leads us to our second general consideration. In estimating S. Paul's theology of the Atonement we must remember that it grew out of a living experience. The apostle never forgot the vision on the Damascus road. However we may try to explain that, it meant for him this, that Jesus was alive and was a source of present power. And even when he is most argumentative upon the meaning of the Cross, when logic and speculation seem uppermost, his reasoning springs from conviction, and conviction in its turn is rooted in the experience of what Christ crucified means in his own daily life. The crucified Christ is the risen and ascended Christ. S. Paul interprets the Atonement in the light of Easter and Pentecost, but He who rose and now reigns is He who once died. Passage after passage in the Epistles proves that a religious experience underlay his theology. "For the word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18); "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 10); "For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his

resurrection ; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin " (Romans vi. 5, 6). Everywhere we read the same story of freedom and hope and life coming to the apostle from the Cross. And nowhere do we find him expounding the theology of the Cross in the abstract. Always he has in view the religious needs of his readers and the source from which they may be supplied.

S. Paul here moves along the same lines as S. Peter, whose early teaching is summarized in the speeches in the Acts of the Apostles. It is a simple theology which is there expounded ; some indeed would hardly call it a theology at all ; but its essence is a glad message of new life and hope springing from the fact of forgiveness mediated through the Cross. " Repent, and be ye baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto remission of your sins " (ii. 38).

There is a strong penal element in S. Paul's theology of the Atonement, which gives offence to many. We shall be in a better position to judge of this when we have discussed Anselm's theory and the theories to which it gave rise. Meanwhile, we can assert with confidence that for S. Paul the Cross was an exhibition of divine love, and sprang from love. For S. Paul the wrath of God was no mere metaphor, as Romans i. shows. Sin was for him a stern reality, and

deserved punishment. The divine holiness was in eternal antagonism to sin, and God could do nothing but punish the unrepentant sinner, if He was to remain true to His own character of righteousness. But deeper than the wrath of God lay the love of God, which met the situation created by human sin by the free gift of Christ. We may banish entirely from our minds any view which would make S. Paul teach that an angry God was appeased by the sacrifice of a loving Son. Love gave origin to the Cross. It was the supreme exhibition of the love of God; and it was as the sinner realized what that divine love meant, and what wounds his sin inflicted on the Father's heart, that he would accept in humble gratitude the offered forgiveness, and seek to make return for such love by a life of holiness and service.

We may take one or two passages as typical of S. Paul's teaching upon the Atonement.

(*a*) 2 Corinthians v. 14, 15. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

The Atonement is here set forth as an exhibition of the divine love. It was the love of Christ which led Him to the Cross. We are reminded of Romans v. 8: "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet

sinners, Christ died for us." And this love of Christ is a constraining motive impelling the apostle to make a surrender of his life in return for it. Christ " died for all." His death was on our behalf, and had an inclusive value. How? What is the meaning of this assertion? The answer is given in verse 21 of the same chapter: " Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." The Cross originated in the divine love, but it was human sin which necessitated the Cross. On the Cross Jesus bore the doom and burden of sin, the burden and doom which belonged to us because we were guilty. Because He did this we are called on to live no longer to ourselves, but to surrender our wills in humble gratitude to His service. " He who has done so tremendous a thing as to take our death to Himself has established a claim upon our life."[1] Unless Christ did something on the Cross for me, what reason have I for being grateful?

(*b*) Galatians iii. 13: " Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This Epistle deals more fully with the Cross than does any other, and shows how absolutely fundamental in Christianity is the death of Christ, and how there flow from it all the recreative and uplifting

[1] Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 143.

forces of true religion. The Law belongs to a dispensation which has for ever passed away. It was powerless to redeem. Subservience to the Law is a negation of the grace which is in Christ. And the obedience which the Law calls for cannot be given; failure in any one point is equivalent to failure in all. No one, argues S. Paul, who really appreciates what Christ has done will want to have anything more to do with the Law.

Now Christ is here represented as being under the Law in regard to His death. What does this mean? How was Christ made "a curse for us"? We note, in passing, that S. Paul does not quote the words exactly as they are written in Deut. xxi. 23, "for he that is hanged is accursed of God." He leaves out "of God," either because he is not concerned to be verbally accurate in his quotations, or more probably because he realized that God could not treat as accursed the Son, whose death was the culminating act of obedience to the divine will. The point is a small one as regards S. Paul, but becomes of significance, as we shall see when we examine later theories of the Atonement. Being made a curse for us is equivalent to being made sin for us. The Law's relation to us as sinners is one of condemnation. The Law reveals the requirements of God in the matter of righteousness, and at the same time the divine condemnation of the sinner who has

failed to keep the Law. Christ became a curse for us by bearing the doom which sin entailed upon us. He took upon Himself the responsibility in which sin had involved us, and is our Redeemer because He did so. His love was so great that it did not shrink from bearing the whole weight of the responsibility which sin had laid upon us. Death is the curse of the Law. That curse Christ took upon Himself.

(*c*) Romans iii. 21–6: "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

It would require a long essay to treat in detail of the difficulties raised by the exegesis of this passage. I do not propose to attempt any such treatment. My present purpose will be served if we can reach some clear ideas upon the meaning of the two phrases "a righteousness of

God " and " whom God set forth to be a propitiation."

The " righteousness of God " may mean two things. First His character as the consistently righteous God, a righteousness which never varies or wavers. Eternally God is true to His own nature. God is for ever the just, the righteous God. Secondly, the righteousness of God is " unto all them that believe." It is a gracious righteousness which is full of purposes of love toward the sinner. If the sinner will repent, the righteousness of God will no longer prove his condemnation, but rather his hope and happiness. God will prove Himself " the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

What does " propitiation " mean ? It means, if we put the matter quite simply, that Jesus by His death did something which man could not do, which effected an alteration in the relationship existing between man and God. As S. Paul says elsewhere : " But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation " (2 Corinthians v. 18, 19).

Now, as Denney shows,[1] if we would do justice to S. Paul's thought, we must insist that

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 163–76.

" propitiation " includes both the above meanings of the " righteousness of God." It is not enough to say that God's purpose towards man is gracious, and that He is eternally ready to pardon and welcome the sinner who repents. Would God be true to His character of unchanging righteousness if it were so ? Is not something more needed, an act of God, which, while it shall display His love for the sinner, shall at the same time vindicate the consistency of His character ? S. Paul sees in the Cross such an act. Christ died ; He underwent the doom of sin, for " the wages of sin is death." He thereby did homage to the inviolability of the moral order, and showed what sin meant for God, and how God, as an eternally righteous God, was in permanent antagonism to sin. At the same time He made it possible for God to justify the ungodly, that is, to blot out their past guilt, and to accept their repentance as the pledge of a future holiness which would one day be theirs.

To quote Denney once more :

It is Christ set forth in His blood who is a propitiation ; that is, it is Christ who died. In dying, as S. Paul conceived it, He made our sin His own ; He took it on Himself as the reality which it is in God's sight and to God's law : He became sin, became a curse for us. It is this which gives His death a propitiatory character and power ; in other words, which makes it possible for God to be at once righteous

and a God who accepts as righteous those who believe in Jesus; He is righteous, for in the death of Christ His Law is honoured by the Son who takes the sin of the world to Himself as all that it is to God; and He can accept as righteous those who believe in Jesus, for in so believing sin becomes to them what it is to Him.[1]

S. Paul's theology of the Cross, if we would fully understand it, demands a far more adequate treatment than I have here given it. The apostle expounds it with much richness and variety, and his teaching cannot be compressed into a few sentences. But I hope I have said enough to make clear the following points:

1. The Cross had its origin in the love of God. It was the culminating manifestation of that love which expresses God's permanent attitude towards the world.

2. Yet for S. Paul there was a penal element in the Cross. By His death Christ underwent the doom which sin entails upon humanity. On the cross He made an expiation for sin. He took sin's penalty upon Himself. Hence we can speak of His death as a propitiation.

3. The Cross made plain to the world the divine attitude towards sin, an attitude of utter antagonism. By taking upon Himself sin's penalty Christ paid homage to the moral order, and vindicated the moral government of God.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 176.

4. Hence God could forgive the repentant sinner who believed in Jesus, without being untrue to His character of Perfect Holiness. He could justify the ungodly because acceptance of Jesus, if it was sincere, meant that for the future the sinner would adopt Christ's attitude to sin. In that change of will and purpose lay the promise of a complete holiness which was to be.

5. The Atonement was a finished act ; it had not to be repeated. But the fruits of the Atonement were to be gathered progressively, as more and more of mankind came under the power and inspiration of the Cross, crucifying the flesh and its passions, and learning to offer the sacrifice of an obedient will.

6. The Cross finds its Interpreter in the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and makes them plain to us. For S. Paul the Cross is a source of life and power. Its fruit is holiness and self-sacrifice.

7. Christ is no mere external intermediary between man and God. He is the Head of the race. In His death all shared. And the risen Christ has power to communicate His life to men, thus lifting them into union with Himself. S. Paul is not concerned to distinguish carefully between the work of the Spirit and the work of the living Christ.

8. The basis of S. Paul's theology is experience. He makes the Cross central in his teaching,

because he had proved the power of Christ crucified in his own life.

9. Finally, sin, for the apostle, was a great reality, and between sin and death there was a close connexion : " the wages of sin is death." [1] And not only was sin a reality : it constituted a pressing problem for a religious mind such as that of Paul. How could the perverted relation between man and God be set right ? Man could not deal with the situation. It required an act of God to deal with it. Such an act was the Cross. There the remedy was found for the ruin caused by sin. There God demonstrated both His righteousness and His love.

[1] The connexion between sin and death is discussed in the next chapter. Many of the points summarized above will become clearer later on. Further treatment, for example, is particularly needed of 2, 3, and 7.

CHAPTER III

THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (*continued*)

1. *The Epistle to the Hebrews.*—However different may be the general atmosphere of this Epistle from that of S. Paul's writings, we shall find a fundamental agreement between the author and the apostle in the significance which both attach to the Cross of Christ. Both are at one in seeing in the Cross an act of God designed to procure salvation for men, an act which is the very foundation upon which all Christianity rests.

The teaching of this Epistle may be thus briefly summarized :

(*a*) The Cross has its origin in the love of God, " that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man " (ii. 9).

(*b*) On the Cross Jesus made a true expiation for sin : " Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people " (ii. 17) : " Who

. . . when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (i. 3) : "Who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of his people ; for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (vii. 27).

(*c*) The death of Christ was a finished work. Whatever that death did in regard to sin was done once and for all—"By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (x. 10); "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (x. 12); "But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many" (ix. 26, 28).

(*d*) Emphasis is given throughout to the idea of sacrifice. The death of Jesus was a sacrifice. Wherever the blood of Christ is spoken of in the Epistle the same sacrificial conception prevails. And the sacrifice which Christ offered was offered for sin. The author uses this sacrificial language because his purpose is to show how the sacrifices of the Old Testament had merely a transitory value and were superseded by the work of Christ. He is writing for those who were anxious lest, with the passing away of the Mosaic system, they should lose all that was most vital in their

religion. He points out to them that acceptance of Christ will bring them a gain which far outweighs their loss. Christianity is the one complete and perfect religion. It consummates all that went before it. The earlier dispensation was provisional and preparatory; it is no more needed now that Christ has come. But, in particular, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were confessedly imperfect and unable to achieve their object, belong to a ritual which has no longer any meaning, now that Christ has offered eternally the one abiding sacrifice for sin.

(*e*) In close connexion with the thought of sacrifice stands the conception of priesthood. "A priest is the essential figure in religion as it is conceived in the Epistle to the Hebrews."[1] And the main duty and work of the priest was to offer sacrifice. We must think of the priest and those to whom he ministers as forming one whole, one body. He represents the people before God, and his work is to promote a fellowship between them and God, to enable them through his ministry to draw near to God.[2] But why cannot each individual freely draw near to God without any priestly mediation? Because sin interposes a barrier. Sin has violated the true relation of fellowship between man and his Maker. Sin is a grave reality in human life. Its presence constitutes, for the author of

[1] Denney, *op. cit.* p. 217. [2] *Ibid.* p. 218.

the Epistle, as for S. Paul, a serious problem. He solves it by setting forth God's method of dealing with the situation. Christ was sent by God as a priest "to make propitiation for the sins of the people," and He made that propitiation by dying the death which sin involves. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Priest and Victim are one and the same. Christ could deal adequately with the situation because, being sinless, He could offer the perfect sacrifice. It was a perfect sacrifice, not only because the obedience which inspired it was perfect, but because, in dying, Christ died for sin, took, that is, upon Himself the whole responsibility in which sin had involved the race. The priestly mediation of Christ, then, has issued in a result achieved once and for all, by which the true relation between man and God is once more established.

Here we have to deal with an objection which is sometimes raised. It is said that the author of the Epistle does not regard the death of Christ as a finished work, because he pictures Christ as continuing His work of priestly ministration in heaven. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (vii. 25). In fact, we are told that the presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement in Hebrews differs entirely from that of S. Paul. The latter makes Calvary the centre of his creed. The work of atonement was completed on the field of history. The redemp-

tion of humanity was achieved in time, at a particular historical moment, when Christ underwent the experience of death on the Cross. But the writer of this Epistle lifts us out of time into a timeless, eternal world, and bids us contemplate the Atonement as receiving its completion in heaven, and Christ as continuing His ministration by an unending act of priestly intercession.[1]

Is this supposed contrast really valid ? Surely we can see that it is not, when we remember these points. First, statements abound (we have already quoted some of them) which make it plain that the author of this Epistle did regard what took place on the Cross as constituting a completed act—" this he did once for all, when he offered up himself " (vii. 27). The comparison which he draws between the Levitical sacrifices, which were constantly repeated, and the one sacrifice of Jesus, becomes meaningless if we maintain that the latter had no finality about it. Secondly, the very ground of the confidence which he seeks to inspire in the hearts of his readers is just this, that he believes that Jesus, by dying for sin, has removed the barrier between man and God, and has so made fellowship between them possible. " Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus . . . and having a great high priest over the house of God ; let

[1] *Cf.* Mozley, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 88.

us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith" (x. 19–22). They are not to doubt; the way is open; redemption has been finally won. But the fruits of the completed act have to be progressively gathered by men. S. Paul realized that Pentecost was needed to make the Cross effective in human experience. Is not the author of this epistle trying to teach the same truth in his own way when he speaks of the continual ministrations of the heavenly High Priest? He lifts our vision to an eternal world in which the central Figure is One who, because He wears our human nature, is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (ii. 18). The living Christ has power. The eternal world and the world of time are not severed by an impassable gulf. From the one influence streams down into the other. Christ can save, can send His life into men. There is a drawing of the Cross. Redemption is indeed a continuous process, which will go on so long as there are any hearts over which Christ is not Lord; but the foundation of the process, what makes it possible, is the fact that Christ has once and for all made purification of sins.

A general confirmation of the view here taken is to be found when we consider the use of the word "eternal" (*αἰώνιος*) in the Epistle. Jesus is represented as "the author of eternal salva-

tion" (v. 9), a salvation which is complete, in which nothing is wanting. He has "through [the] eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God" (ix. 14).[1] Westcott's note on this is as follows[2]: "It could not be said of any man absolutely that his spirit is eternal, but Christ's Spirit is, in virtue of His Divine Personality, eternal. By this, while truly man, He remained in unbroken connexion with God. . . . In men the 'spirit' is, as has been said, that by which they are capable of connexion with God. But in Christ, who did not cease to be the Son of God by becoming man, the 'spirit' is to be regarded as the seat of His Divine Personality in His human nature. . . . This 'eternal spirit' obtained complete sovereignty at the Resurrection." The sacrifice of Christ, therefore, is grounded in the divine nature of the Redeemer, and so has ultimate or eternal value. The blood of Christ is "the blood of the eternal covenant" (xiii. 20). Between man and God a covenant has been established which cannot be superseded. It is final and stands for ever.

The use of the word "eternal" shows us the purpose of the author. He wishes to set forth Christianity, not as one religion among many, but as the absolute or ultimate religion, the final truth of God. "Christianity does perfectly

[1] The Greek has no definite article, though the R.V. inserts one.
[2] *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 261, 262.

what other religions do only imperfectly."[1] If what was achieved on the Cross was not a finished work, this purpose of the author remains unfulfilled. He could not have presented Christianity as the perfect religion if he had had any doubts about the finality of the sacrifice which is its distinguishing mark.

2. *The Apocalypse.*—We may take as typical of the view of the Atonement set out in this book the ascription of praise addressed to Christ in chapter v. 9: "Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests." The ground upon which praise can be given to Christ is that He died, and by His death ransomed men from the power of sin, and so made open the way of access to God. They are, in virtue of Christ's death, "priests" and "a kingdom," that is, a fellowship of true worshippers, rejoicing in the rule of God over their lives. In the doxology in i. 5 we read: "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood."[2] The love is continuous; it embraces past, present, and future. The loosing from sin was achieved by a definite act in the past. On the cross redemption

[1] *Cf.* Denney, *op. cit.* p. 207.

[2] λύσαντι (loosed) is probably the better reading. But the importance attached by the writer to the historic act on Calvary is not lessened if we read λούσαντι (washed).

was achieved once and for all. And a ransom was then effected; and at a cost. Christ "purchased" men with His blood; He "loosed us from our sins." The writer's general position agrees with that of S. Paul. The death of Christ is for him central. The blessings of Christianity flow from that original act of redemption. The word "Lamb" occurs twenty-nine times in the book, and more than once the Lamb is characterized as a Lamb "slain." A lamb suggests sacrifice; its life was offered as a sin-offering.

The Apocalypse portrays the risen and ascended Christ as Victor, wielding all power in earth and heaven, and waiting to bless His Church, and to strengthen it in the hour of trial which was coming upon it. But throughout His triumph is represented as resting upon His achievement in dying. "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (v. 12). The cry of the great multitude "which no man could number" is, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb" (vii. 10). As Denney writes: "Love like that displayed in Christ's death for man's redemption is worthy not only of all praise, but of having all the future committed to its care. It is really a pictorial way of saying that redeeming love is the last reality in the universe, which all praise must

exalt, and to which everything else must be subordinate." [1]

Like S. Paul again, the writer insists that Christ's death has moral efficacy in the formation of character. Those in the white robes " washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb " (vii. 14). The white robes symbolize the soul purified from sin. The thought is that those who came " out of the great tribulation " owed their victory to Christ. It was the power of His Passion, descending into their hearts, which enabled them to do what they did." [2]

Similarly in xii. 11: " And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death." The remembrance of what Christ had done for them, of what His death meant, the recognition that they owed everything to the love which for them and their salvation endured the Cross, nerved them in their hour of trial. Could they be unfaithful to One who had borne so much on their behalf? The Cross, then, though it represented a finished act, had an abiding and continuous influence. Through its power souls were being transfigured and made fit for the heavenly city.

One passage calls for a word of special comment. In xiii. 8 we read " And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 246. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 247.

name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." The worshippers of the beast are excluded from life everlasting. Only those inherit it whose names are in the Lamb's book of life. For salvation is to be found in none other than Christ crucified. So far there is no difficulty about the passage. But a problem arises when we ask whether " from the foundation of the world " is to be taken with " slain," or with " written in the book of life." In xxi. 27 we read that into the Holy City enter " only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Denney argues that " the words ' from the foundation of the world ' are not to be construed with ' slain,' but with ' written,' as the parallel passage proves ; it is the names of the redeemed which stand from eternity in the Lamb's book of life ; not the death or sacrifice of the Lamb which is carried back from Calvary and invested with eternal, as distinct from its historical, reality. An apostle would probably have felt that the historical reality was compromised by such a conception, or that something was taken away from its absolute significance." [1]

Swete in the note in his commentary, while admitting that the order of the words suggests that " from the foundation of the world " should be taken with " slain," thinks that the close

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 249.

parallel in xvii. 8, " they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world," proves that the words should be construed with " written." And he refers to Matt. xxv. 34, " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."[1]

In *Contentio Veritatis*,[2] the Dean of S. Paul's, speaking of Christ's death and resurrection, says : " These are eternal acts, even as the generation of the Son of God is an eternal act. They belong to the unchangeable and ever-operating counsels of God. So it is possible for the New Testament writers to say that the Lamb was slain for us from the foundation of the world, and that the Rock which followed the Israelites through the wilderness was Christ. The Passion of Christ was itself (as the Greek Fathers called it) a sacrament or mystery of an eternal truth ; it was the supreme sacrament of human history, the outward and visible sign of a great supra-temporal fact."

I imagine that Denney is right in his assertion that such a point of view is more characteristic of the Greek Fathers than of the New Testament. The writers of the latter " never raise the abstract question of the relation of time to eternity ; and though the eternal import of the historical, in the life and death of Jesus, is the foundation

[1] *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 167.
[2] Page 298.

of all their thinking, they never describe the Passion as the sacrament or symbol of any reality beyond itself." [1]

But we surely have to distinguish, as Mozley points out, between " eternal atonement viewed as an eternal truth, and eternal atonement as implying something which has been part of God's eternal purpose." [2] The point is not of importance for our immediate purpose of showing the supreme significance given in the Apocalypse to the death of Christ, but we shall find it to be of considerable importance later on when we come to discuss the question whether there is an eternal element in the life of God to which the Cross on Calvary corresponds.

It is, then, abundantly clear that the New Testament teaches that the forgiveness of sins comes to us through the death of Christ. The Cross is the ground of our reception of the divine pardon. Christ had to die that we might be forgiven. And so we are led on to ask what are the special characteristics of the Christian experience of forgiveness. How does it differ from ordinary forgiveness ? If we can answer this question we shall be in a better position to understand the teaching of the New Testament about the Cross.

(*a*) Now the Christian not only takes a serious view of sin, but regards it as an offence against

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 249, 250. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 90.

the will of God. It implies a breach in the personal relations which exist between man and God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" —the core of the matter lies in these words. By an act of free choice the sinner has rebelled against the divine will to which he owes allegiance. He has wounded the loving heart of the Father; his sonship has become a stained and broken thing. Between him and God a barrier has arisen, and in the depths of his being he is aware of an uneasiness and sense of estrangement. He knows that he is in the divine presence, but he knows too that he carries within him something which that divine presence cannot tolerate. He can have no peace of soul until his personal relationship with God is changed.

(*b*) But he is not alone in his sin and unhappiness. All his human brethren have sinned as he has, and have failed in their loyalty to God. The whole race is tainted. There is a vast fellowship of sin. Thus, though his consciousness of his own sinfulness is an individual thing, his shame his own, his remorse belonging to himself alone, when he reflects upon the meaning of his sinfulness he sees that it is part of a common burden shared by all humanity. A deeper significance is now seen in the Cross of Christ. Regarding Christ, not merely as an individual man, but as the Head or Representative of the race (we shall examine later with some care what such expressions really mean), the

sinner finds something of corporate or universal import in His death. Humanity sees itself there. It sees sin as a violation of a moral order or constitution which embraces all men. It sees Christ paying homage to this violated constitution. In the name of the race He asserts the fundamental righteousness of the moral order, which is the expression of the divine character, and demonstrates the true meaning of sin as an offence committed by the whole race against the sovereign principle of the universe. The sinner's consciousness of his own sin had shown him that his personal relationship to God was disturbed. He has now a deeper vision of a disturbance in the scheme of universal relations, and of sin as something more heinous than he had imagined, since it is an outrage upon the moral constitution under which God and man were meant to live in fellowship together.

(*c*) Christ's death brings home to the conscience what sin means to God, what it cost the love of God to redeem man. It is the cost of the Atonement which constitutes its chief problem. In the Christian experience of forgiveness the central feature is the recognition that the Cross reveals the significance of sin for God. You cannot argue about it. A man either has the experience or he has not. But unquestionably the testimony of Christians throughout the centuries has asserted that it was the Cross of Christ which brought home to them the real nature of sin.

The movement is a double one. On the one hand the awakened and repentant sinner, understanding what sin is and realizing what he has done, turns to the Cross, and, with the profoundest humility and gratitude, accepts God's forgiveness there offered him, and so wins new hope and life. On the other hand, as he looks at the Cross and sees there the divine love bearing the burden and shame of sin, agonizing for men and appealing to them to turn from their sinfulness, his own sense of repentance is quickened and deepened. His sinfulness comes home to him, and the divine love comes home to him ; he is re-born, he becomes a new creature. As Denney points out, " This experience does not move on the same level as the stings of a guilty conscience. Conscience, indeed, tells me that I have done wrong and am answerable to God. But the specifically Christian experience of forgiveness goes deeper. I begin to understand that " the spiritual being has no past." [1] I cannot just shake off my sinfulness. I cannot outgrow my guilt. If left to myself, I stand in God's sight as a sinner who carries about with him an eternal burden. I see the eternal aspect of sin. I stand at the very centre of the spiritual universe. I am helpless. I cannot escape from God and His judgment upon my wrong-doing. But I look up and see the Cross. Then all is changed. Out of my very shame grows a new hope. The

[1] *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, pp. 57–60.

breach between me and God is healed. He accepts me, and is ready still to trust me. And in the Cross I see the promise of a complete renewal of character which one day may be mine. That the Cross has this restorative power is a fact of Christian experience. No less doubted a fact of that experience is it, that in the forgiveness mediated through the Cross the meaning of sin is revealed in a unique manner.

(*d*) Forgiveness, as the Christian knows it through the Cross, has another very important characteristic. The Cross makes plain to the forgiven sinner the vital connexion between sin and death. That there is such a connexion the New Testament everywhere assumes, but the assumption is often a great difficulty to the modern mind. Let us try to show what the connexion is. "Therefore," says S. Paul, "as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Rom. v. 12); or again, "For since by man came death" (1 Cor. xv. 21). But was not death in the world long before man appeared upon the scene? Unquestionably it was. There was death in the animal world for thousands of years before any human being was in existence. But when we speak of death in this connexion we mean physical death, the dissolution of the body. We are not thinking of that spiritual aspect which death assumes when you think of it in connexion with man. It was this, however, which S. Paul had in mind. What

we have to remember is that death cannot have the same meaning for a man that it has for an animal, just because man is a moral and spiritual being. All his experience must inevitably be transfigured by the fact of his spirituality. A cow, for example, sees a sunset. The colours photographed upon its retina are the same as those photographed upon a man's retina, but the man can appreciate the spiritual significance of beauty in a way which a cow cannot. The man reacts in his own special manner upon his experience, and the emotional value of his experience is of an altogether different order to the value of an animal's experience. This is true all along the line. Joy, pain, anxiety, expectation are not the same in an animal and a human being. The man's experience is always richer and reflects the movement of his whole personality.

So it is with death. We feel a difficulty over the connexion of sin and death because we habitually think of death as merely physical. "Sin is put into one world—the moral; death is put into another world—the physical; and there is no connexion between them."[1] But we live in one world, not two worlds. Physical and moral run up into each other. The physical conditions the moral, and the moral reacts on the physical. My moral choices affect my physical health, and my physical health affects

[1] Denney, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, pp. 63, 64.

my spiritual state. If we get rid of this false abstraction between the two worlds we shall see how death and sin interpenetrate. Consider. Can we face the thought of death without seeing how the shadow of sin falls upon it? I am to die. I am to go into God's presence. I recall my past life with its long list of failures. As the hour of death draws near I am reviewing my life, of which I am shortly to give account. Am I at ease about it all? Can I lightly pass through the valley of the shadow, sure that beyond it is sunlight, and the Father's welcome?

Surely not. Surely death becomes "the solemn sacrament of sin." The meaning of sin is borne in upon me as death's footfall approaches, and I look out into the unknown which I am so soon to enter. In that grave hour God is the great reality, and spirit and nature meet in Him. They are one; and the dying sinner sees a deep spiritual meaning in death. As he comes face to face with God and his own sinfulness death ceases to be a merely physical thing. It is charged with spiritual significance. It is shadowed by sin, and marks the point at which man's alienation from God is most complete. Death is "the moment when the light of God's presence is finally withdrawn from the impenitent sinner, and his spiritual death, which is the one essential punishment of sin, falls upon him."[1] In this

[1] Essay, *The Atonement*, by A. Lyttelton in *Lux Mundi*, p. 293 1st ed. We need not here discuss the problem of "the larger

matter the appeal is to Christian experience. That experience testifies to the truth of the New Testament teaching that between sin and death there is a vital connexion. "The wages of sin is death." That is what the Christian feels and knows, and that is what gives to death its solemnity.

We may, then, sum up the teaching of the New Testament upon the death of Christ by saying that Christ is represented as taking upon Himself the whole of the responsibility which sin has imposed upon us. He had to undergo death because, as we have seen, death is the experience in which God's judgment upon sin is made most clear to our conscience. "The sacrifice of obedience unto death is offered by His submission to all that constitutes in sinners the consummation and the punishment of their sin, which He transformed into the occasion and the manifestation of His perfect holiness."[1] God's forgiveness of men is represented as being possible only if the divine hatred of sin is at the same time clearly demonstrated. God must be consistent with His own character of righteousness. He could not forgive without making clear His hostility to sin, and the fact that the moral order could not be violated with impunity. Christ did homage

hope." The seriousness of death for the Christian remains, even if there are grounds for hoping that future opportunities for repentance may be given beyond the grave.

[1] *Ibid.* p. 298.

to the moral order. He revealed God's character and sin in their true light. He entered into all the shame and doom which sin entails upon the race. He did not shrink from death, that experience in which the meaning of sin comes home most vividly to the human consciousness. Upon Him was laid the whole burden of sin and its results. We shall have to discuss later some of the difficult problems which arise when we try to think out the theology of the Atonement, and in particular the problem how the sinless Christ could die our death ; and that other problem of what we mean when we call Him our Representative. Meanwhile enough has, I hope, been said to make clear two things : first, that the Christian experience of forgiveness is something both profound and complex ; secondly, that that experience is intimately related to the death of Christ. For His death there was a moral necessity. It was no accident due to circumstances. It represented something eternal in the purpose of God.

CHAPTER IV

ANSELM'S THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT

THEORIES of the Atonement are both numerous and varied, but it is possible to effect a classification of them. They fall into groups. Our grouping, however, can never be exact, for every theory will have points of affinity with theories which belong more properly to some other group. This is only to be expected when we reflect how many-sided is the doctrine of the Atonement, how it touches life at all points, and how rich is the religious experience to which it gives rise. A broad classification, then, is all that we can hope to make.

Now we may classify the various theories under three heads.

1. In the first group will come those theories which speak of Christ as our *Substitute.* Most of them possess some or all of the following characteristics. They find something penal in Christ's sufferings, though perhaps the majority of their upholders would decline to say that Christ was punished on the Cross. The penal element, however, in some form is present in all members

of the group. They regard the Atonement as something objective, a completed act, which influenced God in effecting a change in His relationship to men. "The atoning Christ acts on God for man."[1] Anselm is the historical source from which this group is derived, and we shall consider in some detail his view.

2. The second group speaks of Christ as our *Representative* rather than our Substitute, and pictures Him as acting on God on behalf of humanity. He was "inclusive" man. He made satisfaction to God, not by enduring any penal suffering for sin, but by displaying the true spirit of penitence for sin, and by offering the sacrifice of a perfect obedience. In the name of the race He conquered sin by His complete holiness, thus acknowledging its utter hatefulness, and so presenting to God the sacrifice and service of a flawless loyalty. In some sense His act was the act of humanity. We shared in it, for it was the act of One who is the Head and Representative of the race. The historical origin of this group of theories is to be found in Athanasius. An important modern member of the group is the late Dr. Moberly, whose *Atonement and Personality* will come under some review later on.

3. In the third group Christ is viewed mainly as our *Example*, and His death as a source of moral inspiration for men. The predominant

[1] Mozley, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 173. I am following the classification adopted in this book.

interest of the writers of this group is ethical. They point out how Christ identified Himself completely with man by sympathy, entering into all the shame and doom of sin. He has set an example of what a true human life should be in God's sight. What is required of men is that they should follow that example. No other remedy for sin, and no other satisfaction of God is required, save this, that man, inspired by the life and death of Jesus, should yield himself in complete obedience to God. This " moral influence " theory derives historically from Abelard. I have selected a small book by Dr. White, *Forgiveness and Suffering*, as the modern representative of this type of teaching.

We pass at once to a consideration of Anselm's theory in the *Cur Deus Homo?* which is given in the form of a dialogue between Boso the pupil and Anselm the master.[1]

The problem investigated by the book is this: Why did God become man, and why was it necessary for the redemption of man that Christ should undergo the humiliation of death?

Now God intended man to lead a happy life and to be heir to an immortal destiny. But man sinned, and by his disobedience forfeited

[1] There is an English translation of the book published by John Grant, Edinburgh. My quotations are taken from this translation.

his happiness and his right to immortality. God became man in order that man might recover his lost happiness. Had this not taken place, "the human race, His so precious creation, would have utterly perished, and it was not fitting that the intention of God for man should suddenly be frustrated." It was needful also that "as by the disobedience of man death had come upon the human race, so by the obedience of man should life be given back." This work of recovery could only be carried out by God; for, if it had been carried out by any one else man would belong, not to God, but to that other person.

But, if God became man, why had He to die? Anselm answers this question by investigating the nature of sin. "To sin is nothing else but not to repay to God one's debt." The debt we owe to God is perfect obedience. "The whole will of a rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God." We dishonour God if we do not pay Him what we owe. "Whoever renders not unto God this due honour, takes away from God that which is His, and does God dishonour: and *this* is sin." Also, as long as he does not repay what he took, he remains in fault; nor is it enough only to repay what was abstracted, but he ought, for the insult done, to return more than he took."

Two factors, then, have to be taken into consideration: (*a*) There is the debt of obedience

which we all owe to God and have failed to pay. (*b*) There is the additional insult or dishonour done to God by our disobedience.

Now, suppose that man paid the debt and became perfectly obedient, the dishonour done to God would remain, and would require satisfaction. And if this satisfaction is not made God must punish man, for His honour demands it. "God upholds nothing more justly than He doth the honour of His own dignity. . . . It is therefore necessary that either the honour abstracted shall be restored, or punishment shall follow; otherwise, God were either unjust to Himself, or were powerless for either, which it is a shame even to imagine." It would be unjust to forgive sin which was not atoned. Punishment gives honour to God, for it proves that the sinner is subject to His authority.

It is, then, clear that man cannot make adequate satisfaction for his sin, and this for two reasons. First, man has nothing of his own which he can give. All that is good comes from God. "If I owe to Him myself and all I am capable of, even if I sin not at all, I have nothing which I can give in amends for sin." Secondly, the least sin is an offence against an infinite God, and outweighs any recompense man can make, or the value of the whole world. *Anselm:* "How, if it were necessary, that either the whole world, and whatever is not God, should perish and return to nothingness, or that you should do so small an

action against the will of God?" *Boso:* "When I consider the action in itself, I see that it is a very slight one; but when I enter fully into what it is when I am against the will of God, I see that it is something very serious, and above comparison with any loss whatever." And you do not make amends "unless you repay something greater than is that for which you ought not to have committed the sin."

What, then, could be done? If the debt is not somehow paid, God's purpose that man should reach blessedness will fail. God cannot forgive sin which is unatoned, nor can He suffer "the scandal of this insult caused to God" to pass without requiring satisfaction for it. And the gift made to God in compensation must transcend in value all that is not God, since sin is so serious that the slightest transgression outweighs all that is not God. It is clear that God alone can make adequate satisfaction to His outraged honour. But the fault was committed by man, and man therefore must make amends. This can only be if God becomes man.

We have still to ask why Christ must die. Why was His death necessary? Anselm's answer is, that God could justly require obedience of the Incarnate Christ, for obedience is the debt which all men owe God. Christ, in becoming man, took upon Himself all the responsibilities which belong to humanity. But He could not require death from Christ, for death is the penalty

of sin, and Christ was sinless. Adam, says Anselm, would not have died if he had not sinned. Christ, however, gave up His life as something which was not legally due from Him. "For God will not require this of Him as a debt due; for, since there would not be sin in Him, He would not be obliged to die. . . . Therefore this giving is so to be understood, as that in some way He gives up Himself, or something of Himself, for the glory of God, for which He was not a debtor." And "in no way could man give himself more fully to God than by yielding himself to death for His honour." Christ's death, therefore, was a free gift, which exceeded in value all that was not God, and so made complete satisfaction to the divine honour.

But how did this voluntary offering made by Christ benefit man? This is the last question to be answered, if the enquiry is to be completed. God is just, and justice requires that such a free gift should be rewarded. But what reward could be given Him? "Before the Son did that great thing, all which the Father had was His also; nor did He ever owe anything which to Him might be remitted. What recompense, therefore, could be made to Him who had need of naught, and to whom naught could be given or remitted?" The only solution of the difficulty is that, with the Son's consent, some one else should receive the reward due to Himself. "Should the Son will to give to another that which is due to

Himself, surely the Father could not rightly forbid Him, nor refuse it to any to whom the Son might give it ? " The Son's reward, therefore, is given to men in the shape of forgiveness and restoration to future blessedness, if they seek to live in obedience to God. Thus mercy and justice are reconciled. " So, the mercy of God, which, whilst we were considering God's justice and man's sin, seemed to you to vanish away, we now find to be so great and so perfectly consonant with justice as that neither greater nor juster could be conceived of."

The form taken by Anselm's theory, which seems somewhat remote from our modern ways of thinking, reflects the contemporary ideas of feudalism as to the relation of king and subject, and in particular as to the honour due to the king. In judging of the theory we must make allowance for this local colouring. There is much to criticize in Anselm's doctrine ; but, before we pick holes in it, let us recognize its strong points. It exercised enormous influence on all later speculation on the subject. The *Cur Deus Homo?* is one of the great treatises of Christian theology. What, then, are its outstanding merits?

1. First, it deals the death-blow to the older theory that, owing to man's sin, certain rights were due to the devil who had enslaved man, and that Christ by His death bought the devil off. The world owes Anselm a great debt for

abolishing that doctrine, which Origen was the first to state explicitly. According to that doctrine, a bargain was made between Christ and the devil. In exchange for the souls of men forfeited by sin to the devil, Christ offered His life as a ransom. The devil accepted the offer, but fell into a trap, not realizing that Christ's utter sinlessness would make it impossible for him to retain his hold upon Him, while it would at the same time enable Christ to conquer death. There is an atmosphere of trickery about such a theory, which makes it entirely repugnant to the modern conscience. Anselm's repudiation of this older teaching marks "a turning-point for Latin thought." [1]

2. No one could emphasize more than does Anselm the gravity of sin, and the fact that man is guilty in the sight of God. We have seen how he asserts that no action, however small, which is against God's will can be permitted, even though the performance of it meant that a whole world could be saved from destruction. Now, whatever our theory of the Atonement may be, it must be ethical in colour. It must treat sin as a reality and make it clear that man needs forgiveness. It must show that sin is utterly abhorrent to God. Anselm is at one with the New Testament in giving a moral significance to Christ's death, and in showing that redemption from sin is man's chief need.

[1] Mozley, *op. cit.* p. 128.

3. Only God could redeem man. Anselm insists on this. And in so insisting he brings out the cost of the Atonement, which constitutes its chief problem. He has, indeed, only sketched the outlines of a theory, which it is for a growing Christian experience to fill in. But he put theology on the right path, and so influenced the course of subsequent investigation. Any enquiry into the Atonement must concern itself with determining the significance, moral, religious, and metaphysical, of an act of God, by which God Himself entered into the human experience of suffering and shame and death for the redemption of humanity.

One of our problems will be to discover whether, and if so in what sense, Christ's death can be spoken of as a satisfaction to God. Anselm insists that it was such a satisfaction, and that it was absolutely necessary. Justice required that God's outraged honour should be vindicated. The death had influence with God. It satisfied His honour and His justice. It enabled His mercy to come into play so that He could forgive men. To-day we should hardly put the case as Anselm does when he speaks of " the scandal of this insult caused to God." We should rather take up the thought underlying an expression which he uses elsewhere in the same treatise, when he writes of sin as perturbing " the order and beauty of the universe." That introduces us to the conception of a moral order and con-

stitution under which we live, and raises the problem whether the dignity of that order does not require that some satisfaction should be made if it is violated. But however we to-day are to interpret the notion of satisfaction, we have to remember the immense part which that notion has played in the theology of the Atonement. The *Cur Deus Homo?* (the New Testament for the moment being forgotten) is the fountain-head whence have flowed all the satisfaction theories of Christ's death.

What criticisms are we to pass upon the book?

1. The problem of sin and its remedy is presented in a hard, external fashion, which causes offence. A spiritual fact like sin can never be adequately handled in terms of a mathematical or commercial transaction. "The problem caused by sin is exhibited as if it were a faulty equation, which by fresh balancing of quantities is to be equated aright . . . nothing could be more simply arithmetical or more essentially unreal." [1] Sin cannot be treated quantitatively, but qualitatively. When you are dealing with sin you have entered that mysterious region where man and God meet, and you must use personal terms if you are to do justice to your subject.

2. Anselm, like many of the writers who share his outlook, gives us an unsatisfactory representation of God. There is an opposition

[1] Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 370.

in the Godhead, which takes two forms. God is divided in Himself, because His attributes of Mercy and Justice cannot be reconciled. Or the Father, as Justice, is opposed to the Son, as Mercy. It is true that at the conclusion of the work Anselm seeks to show how the free self-sacrifice of Christ reconciled the opposed claims of justice and mercy, and a case might be made out for asserting that Anselm never really presses the antagonism between the attributes to an extent which leaves us with a fundamental dualism in God. But his picture of God remains unsatisfactory. Human personality, unless it is diseased, always acts as a unity. The unity of the Divine Personality must be something far more complete and intense. And, if one thing more than another is plain in the New Testament, it is that all its writers picture the Atonement as flowing from the love of God. One supreme motive moved Him to redeem man. His purpose was not the outcome of a prior struggle between conflicting attributes.

3. We may put this same criticism in a rather different form by asking what room there is in Anselm's theory for the free gift of God's forgiveness. The New Testament speaks of forgiveness as a free gift. But Anselm pictures the satisfaction made by Christ as not only paying the debt, but making amends as well for the outraged honour. Justice demands that Christ's voluntary surrender of Himself should be rewarded. No

reward can be given to Christ. The reward is therefore, at Christ's wish, or with His consent, passed on to man. Man therefore can hardly be said to be forgiven freely. He is rather rewarded because Christ's request on his behalf cannot in justice be refused.

Anselm's theory, then, cannot be accepted as it stands. It is too formal and symmetrical. Scripture gives a richer meaning than does Anselm to the conception of debt and satisfaction. No barely logical framework can contain the fulness of the religious experience which the death of Christ has created. There is much point in Mozley's remark that Anselm's dogmatic scheme is constructed without sufficient reference to the Bible, and that Boso makes use of the New Testament mainly as a source of objections to Anselm's theory.[1]

Let us now, taking Anselm's theory as a type of the satisfaction theories, which constitute our first group, and as the historical source of them, pass on to enquire what difficulties are involved in such theories ; how much of them we may retain ; what elements in them we must discard. The main feature about all of them is, as we have seen, that they insist that there was a penal element in Christ's sufferings.

(*a*) Now we must reject any view which maintains that God was angry with Christ. If

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 131.

we can speak of Him as being punished, His was not the punishment inflicted by an angry God. Christ was the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased, and the Cross was the culminating example of His obedience to His Father's will. Nor can we regard the Atonement as turning away God's anger from men. God is eternal Love, and His attitude to men, even when they sin, can never be anything but an attitude of love. This does not, however, mean that there is not in God an eternal antagonism to sin. He is no easy-going God, who regards sin as an amiable weakness. The phrase "the wrath of the Lamb" embodies a deep reality, the reality of an ineradicable hostility to sin in all its forms. Further, to speak of God as angry suggests that He is subject to human passions. Anger in a man always involves some disturbance of the equilibrium of the personality, and this even when the anger is what we call righteous anger. No such disturbance can be predicated of God, "with whom there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." Our conception of God must of necessity be anthropomorphic to some extent, for we have only human speech with which to describe Him. But in attributing to Him human qualities we must remember that, while in respect of these qualities a real kinship between God and man exists, He possesses the qualities without any of the limitations which they carry with them in

ourselves. And, of all human emotions, that of anger seems least predicable of God.

(*b*) We must reject, in like manner, any view which pictures a dualism in God, wrath pitted against mercy, or the hostile Father appeased by the loving Son.

(*c*) Nor, surely, can we think of Christ as guilty. Luther called Him "maledictum Dei." S. Paul, it is true, spoke of Him as being made a "curse" for us, but in quoting from Deut. xxi. 23, "he that is hanged is accursed of God," he leaves out the words "of God." [1] Calvin said that Christ in death suffered the punishment which an angry God inflicts on the wicked. All such views are intolerable. Christ was sinless. How could He be guilty? Guilt belongs to the person who has sinned. It cannot be transferred from the wrong-doer to another. And even if guilt were transferable, what about the justice of inflicting on A the punishment which B deserves? Our ethical sense revolts against such a theory.

(*d*) It follows that we cannot describe Christ as being punished. An innocent person cannot endure the penalty which the guilt of another entails. Only the guilty man can endure penalty. We must distinguish between vicarious penalty and vicarious suffering. The latter is a fact, and may have a high moral value. But just as guilt cannot be transferred, so neither can penalty be if we use the term in its strict meaning.

[1] Galatians iii. 13.

(*e*) If we say that Christ made satisfaction to God, we cannot think of the pain which He endured as the equivalent of the sin for which He endured it. Any notion of such a mathematical balancing as this is entirely out of place. "The amends must be in proportion to the offence," says Anselm, and other writers have followed him in presenting the matter in a similar fashion. Thus Dr. Dale writes: "If the penalties of sin were to be remitted some other act of at least equal intensity and in which the ill-desert of sin was expressed with at least equal energy must take its place."[1] The truth of the seriousness of sin and of the cost of the Atonement can surely be preserved without stating it in this arithmetical fashion.

(*f*) We have already seen that we cannot think of God as being angry or appeased by the death of His Son. His attitude towards men is one of unalterable love. Hence we cannot speak of the Atonement as "procuring grace." That grace flows from the Atonement is of the very essence of the doctrine, but this does not imply that divine grace was not there before. It was love or grace which led to there being any Atonement at all. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son."

We have, then, to abandon the legal or forensic way of looking at the Atonement which was current in Anselm's treatise and at the Reforma-

[1] *The Atonement*, p. 391.

tion. It is artificial, hard, external, and too often pictures God as scheming to overcome a difficulty in which He had been placed by human sin. Does this mean that we have, with such writers as Dr. White or Canon Wilson,[1] to throw over the whole of the satisfaction theory with its penal element? I think not. There are, I feel, the following factors to be taken into consideration, which justify us in still maintaining a real continuity with this first group of theories. First, there is a close connexion between sin and punishment. We feel that sin rightly deserves punishment. Hence we cannot regard the Atonement merely as an exhibition of divine love. It was also an exhibition of the eternal antagonism of God to sin. We cannot, indeed, say that Christ was punished, for punishment can in strictness belong only to the guilty; but we can and must say that He entered into the doom of sin. He underwent what sin entails in the race. Willingly did He accept the suffering, shame, and alienation from God which are the fruits of sin. Himself sinless, He took our human nature with all its conditions, and entered into all its experience. I shall hope to make this clearer later on. Meanwhile, if we are prepared to accept the statement that Christ entered into sin's doom, may we not assert that this may fairly be called a penal element? What we have at all costs to preserve is our sense of the serious-

[1] *The Gospel of the Atonement.*

ness of sin, and the fact that God could not lightly forgive it. The satisfaction theory of the Atonement puts these truths in the forefront, and hence has a real value. Doubtless it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to express this theory without raising serious objections ; for no analogies from the law-courts or the administration of human justice are transferable without immense qualification to the relations of God and man. But I should hesitate to drop altogether the language of satisfaction or penalty, because there is within us a moral consciousness, which witnesses to the fact that such language expresses a real truth.

There is a second element in the satisfaction theory which I think we must retain, this namely, that by His death Christ paid homage to the sanctity of the moral order. We live under a moral "constitution," to use a favourite word of Bishop Butler. We believe in the existence of a moral order, or eternal system of right. A thing is not right because God wills it. That were to make the distinction between right and wrong arbitrary. But God wills the right because it is right, and expresses His innermost nature. Right and God are "co-equal and co-eternal." If the moral order is violated some reparation or satisfaction is needed. The element of Justice in God must express itself in punishment of sin. In human punishment there is a retributive element, without which it ceases to be punish-

ment. The remedial and corrective aspects of punishment are of course the most important aspects, but retribution is an essential part of the conception. This retributive element cannot be emphasized in isolation from the other elements. That were to make mere vengeance the object of punishment, and God certainly cannot be thought of as vindictive. But I feel that we should lose an important truth if we refused to see in Christ's death something of the nature of a homage paid to the majesty of the moral order. If the Cross reveals God's love it also reveals His holiness, and the fact that there is a judgment on sin. Christ in a real sense experienced that judgment. We can say this, and yet not hold that He was punished. By retaining these elements in the satisfaction theory I am sure that we are more faithful to the mind of the New Testament writers than if we reject wholesale all thought of satisfaction.

CHAPTER V

THE SUBSTITUTION THEORY AND ITS PROBLEMS

We have still to penetrate into the depths of our subject, and face certain fundamental problems.

1. We may begin by seeing if we cannot make still more clear the meaning of the statement that Christ entered into the doom of sin. If, not being Himself guilty, He did not suffer the punishment which sin involves, what did He suffer? He suffered the agony which a perfectly holy nature must suffer when brought into contact with sin. He entered right into the meaning of sin from the divine point of view. He showed what sin was in God's sight, what an outrage on the moral order, what an offence against His holiness, or (more tenderly) what a wounding of the Father's heart of love. And by His death He showed what the divine judgment on human sin entailed. Sin, as we have seen, casts its shadow on death and gives it its sting. Death, darkened by sin, is the penalty which sin entails. All that sin means, the shame of it, the injury it inflicts on God, its

marring of human happiness, its disturbance of the moral order which binds man and God together, all that doom of sin which belongs to it when man comes face to face with God—all this Christ voluntarily endured. So did He bring home to the consciences of men the true nature of sin. Moberly, in *Atonement and Personality*, says that Christ offered in the name of the race the perfect repentance for sin. Whether we can hold that He did this will be discussed later. But Moberly brings out well what sin must have meant to the spotless soul of Christ, and how His identification of Himself with humanity included a participation in the shame and tragedy of sin. In proportion as we grow into the likeness of Christ shall we understand what entering into the doom of sin means. This is just where we discover how we have to live out the doctrine of the Atonement if its truth is to come home to us.

2. A much more difficult problem now confronts us. What did Christ's death effect that made it possible for God to forgive us? The argument of the New Testament is that forgiveness is mediated through the Cross. Could not God have forgiven us if Christ had not died; and, if He could have done so, why did Christ die? I doubt if any complete answer to this question can be found. In whatever way we state the matter it will always be possible to raise objections. Those who discard all theories of

substitution are free from this particular set of difficulties ; but are they true to the teaching of the Bible ?

Now the burden of Dr. White's book is to show the absurdity of maintaining that God could not have forgiven us if Christ had not suffered. Briefly put, his points are these : Human forgiveness is free, and without conditions. A father may feel that he must punish his child to correct and discipline him, but the exaction of a penalty is no condition of forgiving the child. The moment the child shows penitence the father freely forgives him. Must not God do the same ? Is not the parable of the Prodigal Son the everlasting picture of the divine pardon ? and there there is no word about penalty. And Jesus, says White, always presented God as the Father, using a human analogy to describe His nature. This Gospel principle of a free forgiveness rules out, therefore, all thought of expiation or satisfaction. And a study of the Gospel shows us that the object of Christ's coming was not to transact anything, but to reveal the love of God.[1]

Is this enough ? Can we accept this as an adequate interpretation of the Atonement ? I think not. Dr. White has not, I feel, brought out the full significance of forgiveness. God's forgiveness is not merely a matter of letting bygones be bygones and of dropping the past,

[1] *Forgiveness and Suffering*, p. 76.

or of refusal to exact penalty ; but it looks to the future, and is chiefly concerned with the re-establishment of true relations between God and man. If forgiveness is to be effective there must be a change of will and heart in the sinner. And it is just here that the death of Christ has a meaning richer than Dr. White allows it. Christ offered the sacrifice of a perfect obedience, which meant that man and God, at least in the case of One Man, were once more in right relations with each other. But how does that help me ? How can I be affected by what another does ? If there is no external transference of guilt, neither is there any of merit. Here comes in a consideration of Christ's Person, which more properly belongs to the Representative group of theories, but on which we must briefly touch at this point of our argument, if we are to make any headway with our difficulty. Christ was more than *a* man. His relation to the race of men was unique. In some way, which we shall examine later, humanity was summed up in Him. Throughout the whole of His perfected human life He was in union with the race. He passed through the experiences of His earthly career without fault or sin, and when He ascended He took back with Him His human nature in such a condition of purity that it could be perfectly united with God. Now He is the living Christ, wielding all power in earth and heaven. After His Ascension " there was no limit to the amount

of influence He might have on the whole of the rest of the human family." [1] He can now draw men into union with His perfect life. That is the work which He is continuously doing, sending His own rich life into the lives of men. Potentially, therefore, His triumph is ours ; it will become actually ours if we let Him carry out in us His work of redemption.

Now, if we are ready to accept the orthodox interpretation of His Person and to admit that He is now alive and engaged in the work of drawing men into union with Himself, we have more light thrown on our problem. Because we can now see that God was able to forgive men, not simply because One Man offered the sacrifice of a perfect obedience, but because that One Man's future work would be gradually to draw the race into union with Himself.

God, says S. Augustine, loves us not for what we are, but for what we are going to become. In the first stirrings of genuine repentance He sees the promise of a future completed holiness. He is able to forgive us because He looks on us " as found in Him." The past is forgiven ; we may make the new start. The future is full of possibilities because Christ has the power to transform us into His own likeness.

[1] *The Incarnation of God.* By E. L. Strong, p. 67. This is a book which should be widely read. The author has a deep and living hold upon Christian doctrine, and a remarkable power of simple exposition.

This may not be an answer to all our difficulties, but it surely disposes of the objection that it was an immoral act on the part of God to forgive us for the sake of what Christ has done. God looks at the sinner in the light of the perfection of Christ's life. He sees the immense possibilities which there are in both: in the sinner possibilities of sainthood, in Christ the power to make those possibilities actual. If the sinner repents and turns to Christ in humble trust God anticipates, as it were, the future, and reckons the sinner's imperfect faith as righteousness, because He knows that Christ can work in him the change which will make that righteousness a growing thing in the time to come.

3. We have still to deal with the problem whether God could not have forgiven us if Christ had not died. Here I think Mozley is entirely right in saying that this is a meaningless problem.[1] In putting the question we are assuming that God could have acted otherwise than He did. But we believe that the Atonement was part of God's eternal purpose. The death of Christ was no hastily devised plan to save creation from ruin. In purposing to create humanity God also purposed that Christ should die for human sin. There is one great purpose of God which is being fulfilled through the ages. If this be so, if God eternally planned the Atonement, what is the use of asking what would

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 219.

have happened if He had not planned it? We are simply dealing with a hypothetical and unreal situation.

But, in dismissing the objection stated in this form we have not fully met the difficulties of those who make it. What they desire to discover is the necessity for the Cross. Why *must* Christ suffer, as the New Testament assumes is the case? I suggest that we shall find the explanation along some such lines as the following. Sin involves suffering. Sin against the holy love of God involves a judgment of sin upon the sinner, and an antagonism against sin on the part of God, which implies real hurt to God. God is deeply wounded in His heart of love by our transgressions. He suffers. Forgiveness, again, if it is real, must involve suffering. A formal forgiveness is morally valueless, but a true forgiveness means a love which reaches out through pain and suffering to welcome the repentant offender. God in His love cannot leave us alone in our sinning. He exercises every method, short of compulsion, to win us back into harmony with Himself. His forgiveness waits patiently for us, seeking to actualize itself at the earliest opportunity. All the time we are wounding God by our selfishness and folly, but His forgiveness is not withdrawn; and the moment we repent our welcome is ready for us. Finally, take our modern thought of God as near at hand and immanent in His

creation, and you reach the very rich conception of God suffering with His world. If there is eternally a Cross in the life of God Himself we need not put the question why it behoved Christ to suffer.

We are indeed out of our depth when we speculate upon the Godward side of the Atonement; but we must seek for some theology of the Cross, and it is not a theology unless it tries to find in the nature of God Himself some ground for the Atonement. I have endeavoured to suggest some directions in which we may look for such a ground, and so make clearer to ourselves the necessity for Christ's death. Summarizing the matter as briefly as possible, we may say: (1) The sanctity of the violated moral order had to be upheld. Some act of God was needed to demonstrate this sanctity and the heinousness of sin. Such an act was the Cross, on which Christ died for sin, endured the doom of sin, showed what sin meant to God, and what it cost to forgive it. (2) It was part of God's eternal purpose that Christ should suffer. Behind that we cannot go. (3) But Christ is not to be pictured as an external agent, a third person acting as an intermediary between God and man. He was Himself the very Love of God entering into human life, sharing all its experiences, God suffering with His world that He might redeem it. The Cross expresses the eternal nature of God, who stoops

to suffer that He may heal. God is transcendent, above and beyond His creation, yet He is one with it, immanent, and sharing its burdens.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE

THEORIES of the Atonement belonging to the second group speak of Christ as our Representative rather than our Substitute. They call Him the "inclusive" man, the Head of humanity, and suggest that in some way His act on the Cross was the act of all humanity. If one died, then all died. We pass away from all thought of Christ as enduring penal suffering, and view Him as the Representative of the race, who in the name of the race made the one perfect atonement for sin by acknowledging utterly its horribleness. He conquered sin by offering the sacrifice of a complete obedience in the name of humanity. He alone could do this because He alone was sinless.

I take as typical of this group Moberly's great book *Atonement and Personality*, though Moberly has on certain points views peculiar to himself. He is, of course, following in the main the line of thought suggested in a still greater book, Dr. Macleod Campbell's *The Nature of the Atonement.*

Before offering any criticism of the Representative Theory let us note its strong points.

(a) The defect of many theories of the Atonement, especially of those which speak of Christ as our Substitute, is that they do not bring His death into living relation with men. The whole transaction appears to take place over our heads and to have no vital connexion with our own life. One knows, of course, that even the most ardent supporters of the Substitution Theory have not really meant this. Those who have most insisted that the sinner has only to have faith and to believe that Christ took his place to death and died for him, have assumed that the sinner is truly penitent and wishes to forsake his sin. But too often in their presentation of the doctrine, they have failed to make clear what is the true link between the atoning act of Christ and guilty men. Now the Representative Theory sets out to correct this defect. Its assertion that humanity was included in Christ's act is plain evidence that it sees that a vital connexion must be established between the Atonement once for all achieved on the Cross and the every-day life of a tempted and struggling humanity.

(b) McLeod Campbell insisted on the importance of what he called "the prospective aspect of the Atonement." The Atonement, he said, looked forward as well as backward. It was not merely a cancelling of the debt of the past; it

was already related to the gift of eternal life. Thus the chief blessing of Christ's work is not deliverance from the punishment of sin, but deliverance from sin itself. The fruit of the Atonement is the creation of holiness in us. Nobody takes this up, and shows the supreme folly of misunderstanding the Atonement apart from Pentecost. Through the Spirit we must reenact the Atonement in our own lives. We must follow S. Paul's counsel and die to the world. "It is Pentecost, it is the gift perpetually descending, it is the indwelling of the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of the Crucified, which is the transforming of human personality; a transforming in which we live, for the first time, self less perverse fully will, and the meaning of human personality is consummated and realized."[1] We owe a great debt to the supporters of the Representative Theory for insisting that the phrase Christ died "for us" does not mean that we have therefore nothing more to do, but that the death of Christ must be brought into living connexion with ourselves, and be reenacted in a life of moral experience.

But we have now to consider carefully what we mean when we call Christ our Representative.

(a) If we mean that He was the typical man, the perfect specimen of the race, we get no further in connecting the Atonement with ourselves. A mere Jesus, God "may thank His

[1] Page 191

death do anything for me? How can it save me? How am I in any real way related to it?

(*b*) But by Representative the writers mean more than typical. They mean that Christ was "inclusive" man, and that in a real sense humanity acted in and through Him. Moberly deals much more fully with this matter than does Campbell, who fails to establish the true nature of the relation of Christ to men, though to do this is essential to the coherence of the theory. Still more emphatic is such a writer as Du Bose, who belongs to the same school. He goes so far as to say, "Sin was actually abolished in humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom in the most literal and actual sense humanity died to itself and to sin"[1]; and he speaks of humanity as redeeming itself on the Cross from sin and righting itself with God. Now we must beware of words, and of using language without having fully understood its significance. What do we really mean when we call Christ "inclusive" man? Clearly we cannot mean that you and I died in Christ "by proxy." We are back again in all our old difficulties about a purely external Atonement unless we can bring Christ and ourselves into some kind of living relationship and fellowship. Do we mean

[1] *The Gospel According to S. Paul*, p. 93. *Cf.* the following sentence in *The Gospel in the Gospels*, p. 158—"I should say that Jesus Christ, or humanity in Him, accomplished salvation or holiness through a lifelong and death-completed act of perfect repentance and perfect faith."

that humanity has a life of its own, apart from the individuals who compose it? What is the race? Is it an abstraction? Has it its own consciousness? It may have. There may be a larger unity or organism with its own life and mind, but if there is we know nothing of it. What we mean by the race is the totality of the individuals who compose it. Apart from them it is nothing.

I confess that I find it very difficult to attach any meaning to the phrase "Christ was inclusive man." Yet Christ unquestionably stood to the race in a peculiar relation, which is different from the relation in which you and I stand to it. What was this relation? Can we explain it? We can attach some meaning to the statement that Christ was our Representative. He may truly be so named, because He was genuinely human. He was subject to temptation; as perfectly loving, He could sympathize with, and feel for, all men; and, as sinless, He could do what we cannot: He could offer the sacrifice of a perfect obedience. "His human nature was so real and so perfect that He was involved, so to speak, in all the consequences of the sin which is so tremendous a factor in human life, even to the enduring of the very sufferings and death which in us are the penal results and final outcome of sin, but in Him were the means of His free self-sacrifice."[1] In a word, He was

[1] *Lux Mundi*, p. 297.

the Perfect Victim. He was also the Perfect Priest who offered the sacrifice, as the Epistle to the Hebrews represents Him. He possessed the requisite human sympathy, and the spotlessness from sin, which made such a perfect offering possible.

Again, as the essay in *Lux Mundi* points out, the sacrifice which He offered was composed of the very materials which help to make up our common experience. It consisted of those elements of suffering which have come to us all—poverty, misunderstanding, apparent failure, the desertion of friends, bodily pain, death, spiritual loneliness. His life and death in this sense were truly representative.[1]

At this point I want to say something about Moberly's view that the sacrifice which Christ offered was the sacrifice of a perfect repentance or penitence for sin. He is here following Campbell, who said that Christ made the perfect confession (a better word, I think, than "penitence") for the sins of the race. "This confession as to its own nature must have been a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man."[2] How can a sinless being repent, we ask? Cannot only the sinner, the guilty one, repent? Moberly answers that only one who is perfectly holy can realize what sin is in God's eyes. Our best repentance is tainted, because the sin of which we repent still lingers in us and

[1] Page 298. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 135, 3rd ed.

mars our penitence. Human experience shows that this vicarious penitence is possible. Does not a saintly mother feel intensely the shame of her daughter's sin? Does not she count it as her own? The holier she is, the more will she realize the horribleness of her child's wrong-doing, and the deeper will be her penitence.[1]

To this it is retorted that such a view is untenable. Penitence is the sorrow felt by the guilty person for his sin. Repentance is matter of a personal change of will. Jesus was not guilty, and His will needed no change of direction. No one can repent of sins not his own. Moberly's view is as if a man should say: "No man who has had typhoid fever can perfectly recover, because his bodily tissues have been injured by the complaint; the only person who can perfectly recover is the man who has never had the disease."[2]

I cannot but feel that Moberly has chosen an unfortunate word in speaking of Christ's repentance. The New Testament nowhere describes Christ as repenting. It never uses such a term of Him. Surely we connect repentance with the guilty person, and, Christ being sinless, we cannot describe Him as repenting. Nor, I think, does the analogy of the saintly mother meet the case. Is not that an example of vicarious suffering rather than of vicarious penitence? Can you really repent of a sin

[1] Pp. 121–8. [2] White, *op. cit.* p. 66.

which you have not yourself committed? We emphasize, however, at the same time the fact that Christ entered fully into the doom and shame of sin, and saw its true nature with an absolutely clear spiritual eye. We cannot do that, as Moberly points out, because the hidden taint of sin in our hearts spoils the perfection of our repentance.

Let us return to the main difficulty of the Representative Theory: how to put an intelligible meaning into the expression Christ was "inclusive" or "representative" man, how to interpret the statement that His action was the action of all humanity.

I question if we can attach any serious meaning to such a conception as regards the past. Looking at Christ's death as a past and completed act, I cannot say that I had a share in it. I was not present at the time. The solidarity of humanity is a fact. Physically we are bound to each other, and we share a common spiritual life; but we cannot interpret the statement that humanity was summed up in Christ and acted through Him as implying that the individual members of humanity were somehow present in germ in Him. Modes of thought based on conceptions of heredity or racial development are entirely out of place in this connexion.

On the other hand, we move towards a better solution of our difficulty when we turn away from the Atonement as a completed act of the

past, and look at it as an uncompleted act with an important bearing on the future. We have seen that our moral consciousness demands some view of the Atonement which shall make it, not merely a transaction external to us, but one which evokes our sense of personal responsibility. No theory of the Cross which leaves us with nothing to do can possibly satisfy us. There is, indeed, that in Christ's death in which we cannot share. We could not offer the sacrifice of perfect obedience, or pay the complete homage to the majesty of the moral order. Our sinfulness makes this impossible. Hence we have to acknowledge that Christ has done something for us which we can only gratefully accept. But we cannot leave the matter there. We must personally re-enact the Atonement in our own lives. We must take up our cross, die to sin, and offer to God the service of an obedient will. The Atonement lays a moral obligation on us. It is not something merely outside us; it is something which should be within us. Any charge that the doctrine of the Atonement is an immoral doctrine is met at once, if we make it clear that we are not relieved of our responsibility.

How can we make the Atonement something internal? If we mean, what is the psychological mechanism of the process, who can say what it is? We touch mystery here. Forgiveness is a mystery. The relationship between the soul of man and God is a mystery. None can mark off

the line where the human ends and the divine begins. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." But we can give this answer to the question how it is done by saying that it is done through the Holy Spirit. In other words, as Moberly insists, Calvary without Pentecost is unintelligible. The Atonement, taken by itself (and the New Testament never so takes it), is a strange, external thing, in many ways offensive to our moral sense. But the Atonement coupled with the doctrine of the Spirit, whose work it is to make the death of Christ effective in our own lives, is the most real and blessed of truths, which does not offend reason, though it may not be strictly reducible to logic.

We have, therefore, to accept God's forgiveness in Christ, to identify ourselves with the spirit and temper which Christ showed on the Cross, and to work out the results of the Atonement in our lives, conquering sin by the Spirit's power, turning pain into a discipline gladly accepted, and death into the glad approach to the nearer presence of the Father. Obedience and sanctification are the fruits of the Atonement. Christ bore for us all that He suffered in order that we might be able to bear the same things in His spirit, and so triumph over them.

"The transformation, the destruction, the deliverance, consist in this, that from the sufferings His sacrifice has removed the element of rebellion, the hopelessness of alienation, the sting

of sin. They are ours because they were His ; but they are ours *as* they were His, purified and perfected by obedience, by the offering of a Holy Will, ' by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' " [1]

When we link together Calvary and Pentecost in this way we are able to put a fuller meaning into the idea of Christ as our Representative. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. It is the work of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and make them plain to us. We cannot make any rigid separation between Christ and the Spirit. That, first of all. But, secondly, in the Spirit humanity is in a real sense one. There is One Spirit in whose life we all share. He divides severally to each as He wills. We are, of course, individuals. I am not you, and you are not I. But we are in danger of overpressing our individualism until it becomes atomism. One of the things which we are learning to-day is to correct the excessive individualism of the past. The life of the other world will, I believe, be a life of intenser mutual sympathy, with a greater interpenetration of personality than we here experience. If this be true that in the One Spirit humanity is one, then we may call Christ " inclusive " man, when we look at His redeeming work through the Spirit as a continuous work in the present and future. I did not die on the

[1] *Lux Mundi*, p. 312.

cross on Calvary, but I can die with Christ in the coming days, if I allow His Spirit to transform me. And in thus dying to sin and embracing self-sacrifice I am, *ipso facto*, brought into closer relation with my fellows. We are all sharers in one life mediated to us through Christ. We belong to a kingdom, are members of a body, branches of the vine. Christ is our Representative, not as an example standing outside us, but as a power of life within us. There is one great life, the life of the Redeemer, drawn on by myriads of disciples, who in drawing on it are made one with Christ and with each other. Christ is my Representative just in so far as I day by day share His life in living union with Himself. The doctrine of the mystical union of Christ and the believer is central in S. Paul's teaching, which asserts that the acts of the Head are shared by the members. And this teaching rests in turn upon Christ's words about the vine and the branches as reported in the Fourth Gospel. But here again the doctrine has outlook upon the future rather than upon the past. It cannot be used to make good the statement that humanity died upon the Cross. It refers rather to the future work of the Redeemer, who, since He has been lifted up, is progressively drawing all men into vital union with Himself.

Let us emphasize once more, in conclusion, the fact that, if the Atonement is to be understood, the Person of Christ must be interpreted in

terms of Godhead. We talk of the solidarity of humanity. We mean by the phrase more than the fact that there is a physical tie which binds the generations together. We mean that we are so constituted that what we do and think and say affects other people in countless ways. The solidarity of humanity implies the spiritual interaction of numberless individuals. And the richer the personality of any individual the more will be his influence on others. He will help or hinder more lives than will a personality less rich, and in ways more varied and numerous. This is the truth which underlies the assertion that Christ is our Representative. He can be that in a way which is denied to all merely human beings, just because He is so much more than man. The Resurrection and Ascension proved Him to be possessed of a power whose range is universal. There is no soul He cannot touch, no life He cannot quicken into intenser life. His influence is operative through all the wide circles of existence. His work is the continuous work of drawing humanity more and more into union with Himself.

CHAPTER VII

THE ETHICAL THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT

The third group of theories of the Atonement is known as "the moral influence" group. The writers in this group regard Christ chiefly as Example or Inspirer. Historically their views descend from Abelard (1079–1142), about whom it may be well to say a word.

In opposition to Anselm, Abelard rejects the notion that any satisfaction had to be paid to God; nor does he support the older theory that a ransom was due to the devil. He uses at times, it is true, the traditional language of his day, and speaks of our being enslaved by the devil, who, as the price of our ransom, demanded the blood of Christ; but the conception of ransom was not the heart of his theory, nor can it be harmonized with it. Abelard regards the death of Christ as the supreme exhibition of Divine Love, which was made in order that men, attracted by it, might have a similar love kindled in themselves, and so be liberated from sin. We are justified before God when the flame of this love burns within us. The love is kindled by the

passion of Christ, and, where it is real, drives out sin. Abelard emphasizes the fact that the Cross of Christ exercises a purifying and regenerating influence upon us. He does not, that is, treat Calvary as a mere spectacle, but as a source of moral power and a moral incentive.[1] Yet it remains true that his main interest is in the emotional aspect of Christ's death. While he did good work in showing that the Atonement required some other treatment than the hard logical method of argument which Anselm adopted, he failed, I think, in two directions. First, as Moberly points out, he does not give an adequate answer to the question how through the Cross the love of God is generated in us. "He dwells on the Cross very finely, as an incentive to love, but hardly conceives of it more profoundly than as an incentive . . . he has totally failed to interpret the production of divine love within us, not as a mere emotion of ours, elicited in us as our response to an external incentive, but as being the doctrine of the Holy Ghost—that presence of Christ as constitutive Spirit within, which is the extension of the Incarnation and Atonement."[2] In a word, Abelard's theory is too subjective. There is more in the Cross than an appeal to emotion, nor is it enough to say that through its appeal the love of God energizes in us. We want to see in the Cross a

[1] *Cf.* the note on Abelard in Moberly's *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 372–82.

[2] Pp. 381–2.

great, historic act of God, a sacrifice for sin offered by the righteousness of God Himself, who by His Spirit operates continuously to transform human nature through the life and power which flow from that sacrifice. Secondly, Abelard has not answered that still deeper question, why must Christ *die*? As I have already tried to show, I do not think our reason can rest contented with a theory which makes the death of Christ merely the culminating example of divine love.

Now Abelard's views accord with the popular theological temper of the present day. We are inclined to be somewhat suspicious of dogma, and to question the value of speculations upon such a difficult subject as the Atonement, which we feel to be beyond the grasp of human intelligence. The "moral influence" theory has an increasing number of adherents. It is therefore necessary to examine it carefully.

The main features of the theory are these :

1. It repudiates entirely the penal element. Its supporters will not allow that you can talk of satisfaction, in the sense of propitiation or the satisfaction of justice, or of punishment, or of anything of the kind in connexion with Christ's death. Extreme expression is given to this contention in Canon Wilson's Hulsean Lectures, *The Gospel of the Atonement.* He writes :

The doctrine of redemption is embodied in the

words, "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven." He came to make us what God intended us to be. That is all. If I may express in an aphorism which concentrates the leading truth, but will mislead unless read in the light of the qualifications I have stated and implied, the Incarnation is itself the Atonement. The Life was manifested, and we have seen it. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. The reconciliation of the ancient dualism is found in the identification of the human and the divine life in the person of Christ. This is the spiritual truth of which transactional theories were meant to be an embodiment, but have become an "immoral counterfeit." . . . Let us say boldly that the Incarnation, that is, the life and death of the Christ —for the life and death were equally necessary— is the identification of the human and the divine life. This identification is the Atonement. There is no other.[1]

Or, again :

All these phrases [he is referring to such expressions as "Christ in me," "Christ liveth in me," "putting on Christ," and the like] start into new life and fulness of meaning when once we grasp S. Paul's leading thought that, just because the Eternal Life of God was manifested in Jesus Christ, therefore that same Life of God is also diffused, shared, at least potentially, among all men, and only needs the begetting again, the awakening, to make them the actual

[1] Pp. 87–89.

conscious possessors of that Eternal Life. . . . Nevertheless, in these phrases, as it seems to me, most definitely, accurately, and almost scientifically expressed, is S. Paul's thought of the Atonement, which needs no other expression. They are not to S. Paul figures of speech. Our identity in nature with Christ is as real and natural as that with Adam. . . . Is our spiritual life literally the life of Christ in us? S. Paul says yes, and he means yes. If so, then how can we be more at one with God than by sharing the Spirit of Christ, that Christ who is one with God? What other atonement, remembering what atonement means —at-one-ment—is possible? Only let us share it more and more fully.[1]

2. The Cross is viewed mainly as an exhibition of God's love, made with the purpose of appealing to men, and so drawing them to self-sacrifice and holiness. The spectacle of the Divine Sufferer speaks to the emotions and wakes in the sinner a grateful response.

3. We win salvation by uniting ourselves with Christ in the spirit of moral obedience. There is no other remedy for sin, no road of reconciliation with God, save through the surrender of the human will to the divine will. God made the revelation of His love through the Cross of Christ in order that men might be drawn into moral union with Himself.

4. We notice that both the other groups of theories, if they are rightly interpreted, include

[1] Pp. 57–59.

the teaching of this group. That the Atonement flows from, and is an exhibition of Divine Love is a fundamental contention of those who speak of Christ as our Substitute or Representative; and they would be the first to insist that the fruits of the Atonement must be reproduced in us. It is true, as we have already seen, that writers of the first group have not always presented their views in a very satisfactory fashion. They have left unreconciled the claims of the Divine Love and the Divine Justice, and have at times tended to make the Atonement appear as a transaction merely external to ourselves. But these are mainly faults of exposition. When they are rightly expounded, their views include all that is positive in the teaching of this third group. Hence the "moral influence" theory is distinguished primarily by its negations, by its refusal to see in the Cross any penal element or element of satisfaction.

5. The theory emphasizes the cost of the Atonement. It insists that it cost God much to forgive. This is especially brought out by Dr. White in his small volume *Forgiveness and Suffering*.[1] Canon Wilson, too, speaks of the "inherent necessity of the divine nature to

[1] *Cf.* Chapters V. and VI. The chief feature of this book is its insistence upon the connexion between forgiveness and suffering; and it might, therefore, be argued that it treats its subject from so special a point of view that it is hardly typical of the "moral influence" theory. But I regard it as characteristic

suffer," and to suffer because of human sin, and suggests that " after patient thought in presence of this law of the divine, we may feel that here is the explanation of the identification of the Atonement with the Cross." [1]

Let us see what White has to say about forgiveness. Forgiveness, he insists, is a personal relation. It is not something mechanical, artificial, external, but is a heart-to-heart transaction between the offender and the person whom he has injured. We should all agree that a merely formal forgiveness is worthless. If you say that you forgive a man, and at the same time resolve that you will have nothing more to do with him, you have not really forgiven him. If your forgiveness is genuine, it must mean that you welcome back the offender into the circle of your love. Between you and him is established a new relationship which has reference to the future. It is not merely that the guilt of the past is set aside. The future is seen to be full of the possibility of fresh and expanding friendship, which it is your intention to cultivate. And on the part of the person who is forgiven there is the sense that he is once more trusted. Hence he is moved to make amends for the past by proving

of the writers of this group generally that they emphasize the cost of the Atonement. Also there is much in Dr. White's book which is not concerned with the relation between forgiveness and suffering, but may well be taken as explanatory of the " moral influence " theory.

[1] Page 103.

in the future that he is worthy of the new confidence reposed in him. The whole transaction is vital and personal, and pregnant with the seeds of future growth. If these elements are not present there is no real forgiveness.

Now such real forgiveness costs something. An element of suffering enters into it on both sides, but more especially on the side of him who forgives. In the case of the Prodigal Son the love of the father lived on through all the pain he suffered, and won an added value just because of the pain. "The worth of forgiveness is measured exactly by the intensity of the suffering inflicted by the offender." [1] The cost is here borne by the injured person, and the cost is greater in proportion to the depth of the injury. A hard justice might argue that the offender should bear all the pain which his evil deed has caused. But love works otherwise. The man who has suffered the injury endures the chief pain, and so his forgiveness of the other costs him much. Not that the wrong-doer does not suffer too. If he is really repentant he will feel the pain of remorse and shame, but the exquisiteness of the suffering, its intensity, delicacy, poignancy, belong to the one who forgives.

It is sometimes said that the writers of this third group minimize the seriousness of sin, and portray God as pure Love without any element in His character of deep-seated antagonism to

[1] White, *op. cit.* p. 77.

sin. I do not believe that such a charge can be fairly maintained. The Cross reveals God's forgiving love ; but it is a *Cross*, and the form which the revelation has taken is one which is determined by sin. The Cross shows the divine antagonism to sin and the suffering which sin inflicts on God. If the road of salvation for the sinner is one of moral obedience and of identification of himself with the Spirit of Christ, that implies that sin is the one obstacle which stands in the way of attaining salvation. Canon Wilson writes :

What does this way of regarding the Atonement make of sin ? This also is a great question. If it passes over sin lightly, then it fails. The strength of the expiation theory lies in the truth of its representation of sin as something terribly real ; its representation of it as something that God's justice could not pass over, but for which an infinite penalty must be paid. Some may feel at first that to cast doubt on the penal character of Christ's death must be to lessen the awfulness of sin. But is it so ? The thought that sin is the cause of the δεῖ παθεῖν—that the perfect Son of Man must bear all the perverseness and unfaithfulness of this strangely sinful world, if He is to lift it out of sin, does not make light of sin. And surely no one so feels the terrible power of sin in himself and its guilt as one who recognizes that he has always had the light and always sinned against the light. This view does not underrate the terrible reality of sin.[1]

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 116, 117.

Dr. White, in like manner, insists that human sin wounds the heart of God, and hence that His forgiveness implies suffering. God suffers every time that we do wrong. Undoubtedly there is some danger that men should picture God as a kind, benevolent Father who will not be hard on our failings, if Christian teachers hold Him up as Forgiving Love, without showing what forgiveness implies. But the very heart of the "moral influence" theory is its insistence on the emotional appeal made by the Cross, and any attempt to analyse that appeal leads us at once to see that Christ's sufferings were the result of human sin. Sin causes suffering. It causes suffering to God. Jesus suffered on the Cross because of sin. "See in My Cross what your sin means to the love of God; see how it hurts Him"—so speaks the Divine Sufferer. And is it not true that the sense of our sinfulness comes home to us more clearly when sin is presented as the wounding of a heart of love, rather than as a violation of a law of righteousness? It is both, and both aspects of it must be kept in mind; but while the one may leave us unmoved, the other strikes home to the very core of our being.

The "moral influence" theory, then, has the support of Christian experience. There is an appeal from the Cross which moves the depths of our personality. We may not be able completely to analyse it, or to argue about it; but

it is a fact that sinners are turned to repentance by seeing in the Cross the love of God agonizing for the world. Thousands of simple minds have never speculated about the Atonement. They have just seen in Christ's Cross God's love for their souls, and in thankful gratitude have tried to live lives of holiness and self-surrender. There is a real attractiveness about this theory.

It accords also with the teaching of the New Testament in the emphasis which it places on the connexion between forgiveness and the sufferings of Christ. It brings out the fact that love involves self-sacrifice and therefore pain. When with the love of Christ we couple His sinlessness we can see how acute must have been His suffering; for He alone could view sin as God views it. The forgiveness mediated through Him was therefore something which cost God much. The Father's heart of love is ever tender towards His human children. They sin, and the arrow goes straight to that heart. But the Divine Love never swerves. It still yearns over the sinner. When he turns he is at once forgiven, but the forgiveness is at all the cost which his sin imposes on the Divine Holiness.

The problem remains whether the theory has satisfactorily explained why Christ must die. Is it enough to say that He died because He was ready to show that His love knew no bounds, and was prepared to accept even the last indignity of a shameful death? Or that He died to prove

to men that He could sympathize with them to the uttermost by sharing the experience which was most full of terror? I think, as I have tried to show, that we need a deeper explanation. But, be that as it may, there are features in the "moral influence" theory which are of great value, particularly that emphasized by Dr. White that a genuine forgiveness involves suffering.

To the thought of God as suffering we now turn. It may perhaps suggest a view of the Atonement which will prove satisfying to the modern mind.

CHAPTER VIII

GOD SUFFERS WITH HIS WORLD

THAT God suffers with His creation is the thought to which our minds are being forcibly driven to-day for a variety of reasons, and it is this thought, I believe, which will best help us to a satisfying doctrine of the Atonement.

Let us begin by asking who suffered on the cross? Was God suffering there? There was an ancient heresy, which the Church condemned, called Patripassianism, or the doctrine that on the Cross the Father suffered. Praxeas, who came from Asia Minor to Rome, was the first to teach in the last quarter of the second century that the Father suffered on the Cross in the Person of the Son, but he qualified his statement by saying that He suffered by sympathy. A little later Noetus developed this teaching, and, obliterating the distinction between Father and Son, boldly maintained that the Father was born and lived and died as a man. Why did the Church condemn this teaching as heretical? Not because it was concerned to remove the element of suffering from the life of God, but because

such views were incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity. This was the central feature of the heresy, the denial of personal distinctions within the Godhead. It was this denial which compelled the Church to attempt to define the nature of these distinctions.

Now in saying that God suffers with His world we are not reviving this condemned heresy. We are rather concerned to-day to banish the thought of God as a Being so transcendent that He is not concerned with what goes on in the world. God is transcendent. He is not the world, but above it, and the source of it. Yet we have to think of Him at the same time as immanent and operative in the time-process and in the evolution of the universe. We must somehow preserve both thoughts of Him. The Divine must be construed by our thought as both Process and Perfection.

What, then, is God's relation to the Cross? We cannot hold with the Patripassians that the Father actually suffered in the character and form of the Son. But neither can we think of Him as watching Jesus suffer with calm, indifferent eyes. We are told that discords make a harmony, and that all earth's discords, its sorrows and struggles and pains, make a heavenly harmony. We hear the discords. Who hears the harmony, if harmony there be? God, it is said. But that is an intolerable thought, if it means that God sits in some Olympian calm and

watches a world in agony. No; as Jesus suffered on earth from man's sin, so does God suffer. Our sins wound God. The agony that pierced the heart of Jesus on Calvary pierced God's heart. The Divine Love revealed in, and mediated by Jesus, eternally suffers from our sin.

The first of the Thirty-nine Articles says of God that He is "without body, parts, or passions," which suggests that He is an impassible Being, who cannot suffer. But what these words mean is that God is not subject to our human infirmities. He has no body such as we have, and therefore cannot suffer bodily pain. It does not mean that He cannot suffer at all, or that He is so far removed from His creation that He is not in living and sympathetic contact with it. We call God a Person. If the word has any significance when so used, it must connote that God possesses those attributes of personality which give meaning to our thought of a person. God must be able to love, sympathize, and suffer. May not the acutest form of suffering be suffering by sympathy? Jesus, at any rate, bade men think of God in these personal terms. Now, as White points out, there is an important distinction between pain forcibly inflicted from without, and pain voluntarily endured with some high end in view.[1]

If God could suffer because of some external compulsion imposed upon Him He would be a

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 91.

limited God, involuntarily limited by the operation of some power outside Himself. Such a thought of God, though it is in vogue in some quarters to-day, does not satisfy us. But the self-limitation of God, by which He freely enters into the life of His creation and shares its suffering, is a conception of an altogether different order. We should embark upon a long and difficult enquiry, if we were to discuss here the problem of the self-limitation of God.[1] It is enough for our purpose to ask whether the fact that God has created a universe does not imply some limitation of self, and more particularly whether such self-limitation is not shown in His gift of freedom to men. Again, does not love imply self-limitation? Love means self-sacrifice. He who loves freely spends himself for others, enters into their life and interests, and is ready to share the burden of their sorrows. Now God is Love. Must not God know what self-sacrifice is? Is not the metaphysic of the doctrine of the Incarnation just this, that a free act of self-surrender is the fundamental principle of the world? And, as we have already seen, the New Testament speaks of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," which (if this line of exegesis is correct)[2] means

[1] This problem is dealt with by Rev. S. A. McDowall in his *Evolution and The Need of Atonement*, and *Evolution and Spiritual Life*.

[2] *Cf.* Chapter III of this volume.

that there is, as has been said, eternally a Cross in the life of God.

"There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside Jerusalem. And, now that the cross of wood has been taken down, the one in the heart of God abides, and it will remain so long as there is one sinful soul for whom to suffer." [1]

We have seen how theories of the Atonement are closely dependent on our thought of God, and how we can trace historically the effect upon the doctrine of the various conceptions of God which prevailed at different times, those conceptions reflecting in their turn the colours of contemporary thought. What is our thought of God to-day? What are the main ideas which we associate with our thought of the Supreme Being? I will mention two—the thought of God as Love, and the thought of Him as Immanent, or near at hand.

1. *God as Love.*—It may be said that Christendom has always so thought of Him. This is true; yet the fact remains that some of the theories of the Atonement which we have discussed prove that this thought was not always, as it surely should be, the determinative element in Christian theology. Power, anger, offended dignity—these were attributes of God

[1] Quoted in *Foundations* from Dinsmore's *Atonement in Literature and Life.*

equally prominent. To-day we have re-discovered Christ's teaching about God, of which the essence is the Divine Fatherhood. This does not mean, let us say again, that God is the easy-going Being described in Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyám.*

> " Why," said another, " there are some who tell
> Of One who threatens He will toss to Hell
> The luckless Pots He marr'd in making—Pish !
> He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

Love and holiness go together, and such a Holy Love is eternally antagonistic to sin, and can and must punish the impenitent sinner, if the character of God is to remain consistent with itself. We do not minimize the seriousness of sin, or make God tolerant of it, by emphasizing the fact that He is Love. Rather, as it seems to me, does the thought of this Eternal Love help us to see sin in its true colours, for we know what it is to wound a human heart which loves us, and have experience how love can suffer on the human plane. We understand then how love and suffering march, and must march, hand in hand.

Now this thought of God enables us to approach the doctrine of the Atonement in the right spirit. A proper atmosphere is created for an appreciation of the stupendous fact of the Cross ; and many of the objections brought against the doctrine melt away in the light of this conception of God. Rightly do we feel those

objections, because in many theories of the Atonement there is something which offends our moral consciousness. At all costs our doctrine of the Cross must square with conscience ; and not only with conscience, but with something deeper, with the experiences of that deep moral life of personality which can hardly be translated into words. There is a life of the soul which is lived in the mysterious region covered by such words as confession, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation. Here lie the hidden springs of our religious and ethical life. Love is the word which best explains why they are there. It is because God is Love, and has put love into us, that we experience these movements of the spirit. The thought of God as Love, if you follow it out, best explains us to ourselves. Let us, then, with the New Testament as our guide, think of God first of all, and always, as Eternal Love.

2. *God as Immanent.*—Immanence, in its strict meaning, implies indwelling. It is a spatial conception, and suggests that God dwells in His works. But we cannot apply to God this thought of local habitation. God is not *in* a table. A box can be within another box because both occupy space. But God is Spirit, and spirit cannot be in space. We speak in common language of our souls as dwelling in our bodies, but the expression, strictly taken, is inaccurate. We might search for the soul for ever with a micro-

scope, and should not find it. God and nature are not to be identified. The error of Pantheism consists in this identification. The pantheist says, "God is all, and all is God." But the theist speaks of nature as God's work or creation. It owes its origin to Him. He is behind and above Nature. Can we speak of the physical universe as God's body indwelt by His Spirit in the way in which we popularly speak of our bodies as indwelt by our spirits ?[1] I think it is better to speak of the universe as God's work ; first, because we are more likely to avoid giving a wrong interpretation to immanence, and, secondly, because the term "work" preserves more clearly the truth that Nature owes its being to the will of God and expresses His creative purpose. The transcendence of God is one of the primary truths of Christianity. We can admit no thought of Him which weakens this.

On the other hand, we cannot rest in the conception of a distant God, such as some of the deists had in the eighteenth century. God, it was then commonly held, made the world in the remote past, gave it power to develop, and Himself stood aloof and watched it progress, occasionally interfering with a miracle, if something went wrong with the course of its advance. In face of such a view men might well ask what

[1] For a discussion of this point *cf.* Illingworth's *Divine Immanence*, Chapter III.

God was doing in the intervals when He was not working a miracle. To-day our whole mind moves in another direction. We have come to think of God, not as remote, but as near at hand. By His immanence we mean, not literally His indwelling in His works, but His perpetual creative and sustaining activity. God is always at work, always bringing the new out of the old. At every moment the universe depends upon His creative action. If that were withdrawn the whole would collapse into chaos. One cannot but regret that the fourth Commandment is read each Sunday in the form in which it is given in Exodus, for the statement that God " rested the seventh day " leaves upon the popular mind an impression of the relation of God to the universe which deeper reflection shows to be entirely untenable.[1]

We have been much helped in thinking of God as immanent by physical science. The doctrine of evolution tells us that God's method is one of slow and progressive working. The earth is millions of years old. Only gradually did it reach a condition in which life became possible upon it. When life appeared (whence life came we know not) long ages passed before the human species came into existence, and the story of humanity goes back into a very remote past.

[1] Far more suitable for public worship is the statement of the same command in Deut. v. 14.

What science has found out about the earth and the history of man helps us to think of the gradual unfolding of a great divine plan. We see, as it were, God at work. He is always creating, executing stage by stage His age-long purpose. This thought brings Him near to us, and we understand better what His immanence means.

When the doctrine of evolution was first propounded science was on the whole hostile to religion, just as the majority of theologians were hostile to the new evolutionary teaching. Many felt that evolution had banished God. But when the excitement died down and men had more time to reflect, they began to see that, though evolutionary science ran counter to certain traditional views of creation, it in no way upset theism. Physical science asks the question, How? What is the method of creation and of the development of the universe? How have things come into being? How do the forces of nature operate? Theology and philosophy ask the deeper question, Why? Why is there a universe at all? What lies behind the evolutionary process? Is it self-explanatory, or must we not posit as the ground of it all a Personal Will? A thing is not less divine because it comes into being slowly. The glory of God is not less because He executes His purposes through successive stages, rather than by an instantaneous output of power; just as one of

our cathedrals gains in significance for our appreciation because it represents the slow growth of centuries. We have learned with regard to the Old Testament what a progressive revelation means, and the value we attach to the Bible is increased because we thus trace in it the record of the gradual education of a special race of men by God. In the same way we may think of God as progressively revealing Himself through Nature, and so add richness to our thought of Him.

It may be well to add one caution. God's method of working in Nature is gradual, but there is no necessity that it should be so always. We cannot tie God down to any one method of operation. Already science has somewhat modified Darwin's view that all advance in the vegetable and animal worlds was due to the gradual accumulation and transmission of slight changes. We have discovered that sudden changes of a large kind may and do occur, and that the old maxim is not invariably true—"nature does nothing by a jump." When you come to the field of history, where allowance has to be made for the effect of human freedom upon the course of events, it is obvious that still more account must be taken of the element of catastrophe, as we may call it. The human will can resist God, or can co-operate with Him. If there were more co-operation would not spiritual results be achieved much more rapidly? Do we not

compel God to work more slowly than He desires, because we are too blind or too selfish to share with Him His purposes? Greece blossomed into the perfection of sculpture in a few centuries. Hebrew prophecy was a marvellous development of a comparatively few years. You can lay down no uniform time-table for spiritual achievement. We cannot, therefore, apply the conception of evolution to human history without carefully remembering that the word "evolution" is merely a generally descriptive term, which covers very different processes, and includes very different factors, according to the sphere where you apply it. The theist, who believes in the existence of a Personal Will behind the universe, will find no logical difficulty in holding that that Will may, for a good and sufficient reason, act suddenly or catastrophically, and break in upon the slow sequence of change which marks His customary mode of operation. Christianity teaches that the Incarnation was such a breaking-in. Not that it was without previous preparation; but what went before it neither produced it, nor explains it. The Atonement, similarly, was a free act of living self-sacrifice on the part of God.

If now we put together our two thoughts of God as Love and as Immanent, if we think of God as near at hand, ever acting upon His universe, ever sympathizing with men and seeking by His love to draw them into union with

Himself, we have, as I have said, a background, against which the Cross of Christ shines with new meaning. Three great thoughts come before us. First, the thought that God is suffering with His world, sharing its sorrows, and entering into the struggles of His creation. Secondly, the thought that the Cross of Christ was no after-thought on the part of God, but was the expression at a definite historical period of something which represents an eternal actuality in the divine life. "God so loved the world that He *gave*." This giving was an act of self-sacrificing love. Love entered into all the shame and sin of human life that it might redeem it. But this eternal love had always been thus sacrificing itself. There never was a time when there was not this self-impartation of God in loving sympathy with His universe. The third thought is the same thought, but rather differently focussed in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the thought of God perpetually working in men's lives, summoning them to service and the cross, uniting Himself with men that He may give to men His own life of self-sacrifice. Set the historic Cross of Calvary against this background, and see what rich meaning it wins!

Some have said that the conception of a suffering God is derogatory to the majesty of God; others, that they receive no help from such a thought, and would rather picture God as living in an eternal peace, not indeed being indifferent

to the sorrows of humanity, but not so feeling them that they mar His serenity. Here one may perhaps say one or two things. First, we must carefully distinguish between the doctrine of a finite God, who is wrestling with the world's pain and sorrow, and is in danger of defeat unless man comes to His assistance, and the Christian belief in a God of infinite power, who, if He is immanent, is at the same time transcendent. God suffers because He chooses to suffer. His love freely creates its own burden, freely chooses to carry its cross. There is nothing derogatory to God's majesty here. On the contrary, that majesty shines with all the more splendour just because of the self-sacrifice it is ready to make.

Secondly, we have to ask whether God's love could prove itself to be such in any other way than by sharing the sorrows of humanity. How does a mother prove her love for her child? Not by some expression of a distant sympathy, but by the closest possible identification of herself with her child's pain. That is the method of love's working. He who loves must be ready to lose himself in the life of the other who is loved. Human love is God's creation, and must carry on it some stamp of its divine original. Thirdly, we have seen that we must preserve the double thought of God as immanent and transcendent. The human mind cannot fathom the problem of how such a double existence is possible. We cannot understand completely

either the nature of the divine life as transcendent, or its immanent relation to the time-process. But we feel that there is substantial truth in both conceptions. It is by retaining both thoughts of God that we endeavour to avoid the difficulties which occur when we dwell upon only one of these thoughts. And, in retaining both thoughts, we are able to satisfy what is perhaps an instinctive demand of our nature, that the Supreme Being whom we worship shall be somehow in His essential constitution lifted above the limitations and imperfections of finite life. God suffers with His world. Can we not hold that, and at the same time hold that He is a centre of peace? Strife and struggle belong to time, not to eternity. God dwells in eternity. The fact that He does so makes it possible for Him to stand to the time-process as its goal and sustaining ground. If He enters into our limitations, He is at the same time beyond them. Hence, while His love really suffers from human sin and feels all earth's pains, it remains a victorious love, which knows no defeat, and is at each moment triumphant. I think we can hold both thoughts of God without making either of them unreal. We can assert that He really suffers, and at the same time sees the time-process as a whole which moves towards the perfection which belongs to His transcendent life. Finally, we may ask those who feel repelled by the thought of a suffering God whether Chris-

tianity can be interpreted on any other terms. Is not the very heart of the Christian revelation just this doctrine of a God who stoops to redeem by taking upon Himself the sins and sorrows of a burdened world? God enters time; God becomes subject to an historical process, which involves suffering and death; God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, is ever operative in His creation, sharing its life. If Christianity teaches that, it teaches the doctrine of a suffering God.

CHAPTER IX

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

BEFORE the war there were signs that the place to be given to the Atonement in the system of Christian theology was being reconsidered. The older Evangelicalism, which reached its high-water mark at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, made, as is well known, the Cross central in its teaching. Christ crucified was the determinative principle of evangelical theology. Then the pendulum began to swing in a different direction, and the Incarnation took the place which the Cross had held. Of this change of emphasis in England the teaching of Bishop Westcott was perhaps the chief cause ; though Westcott himself was only giving expression to tendencies of thought, which had for some considerable period been gathering force from many quarters and for varied reasons. He argued that, even if there had been no sin, the Incarnation would still have taken place ; only then the mode of Christ's incarnate life would have been different. There would have been no need of Calvary. Christ would have

revealed to an undeveloped humanity what the perfection of personality meant, but He would not have been the Redeemer of broken and sin-stained lives.

Argument about hypothetical cases, which can never become actual, does not carry us much further. But it is pertinent to ask whether the New Testament knows anything of an Incarnation which can be defined apart from the Atonement. Is not the general teaching of the New Testament this, that Christ became incarnate in order that He might redeem men from sin? If this is so (and our earlier analysis of the Gospels and Epistles shows that this is the case), then the Incarnation must be regarded as a means to the Atonement. We cannot reverse the position. The Cross stands out in the forefront of the scheme of Christianity, and the first place in our theology must be given to a great redemptive act of God, by which God sought to effect a moral change in the lives of men. Not the speculative, but the moral interest becomes paramount for the Christian theologian. Now before the war, as I have said, theological interest in the Atonement had already begun to revive, and Westcott's teaching was being criticized. Since the outbreak of the war the Cross has leapt into increasing significance. Why is this?

In the first place, we have before us an illustration of the appalling results of sin. We see what ruin and havoc sin can cause; we see the tragedy

of sin written large in letters of blood ; and so are compelled to think more deeply than perhaps we have done in the past what sin really is, what is its cause, and whether the evil can be cured. We are driven back to Calvary, and to the New Testament with its exposition of the Cross as God's method for dealing with human sin. In the second place, we see what suffering is. We knew it, of course, before ; but never had we seen it on such a scale ; never before had we witnessed a world in agony. What is more natural, what more inevitable, than that we should be attracted by the picture of the Divine Sufferer ? Can He, we ask, throw any light upon the problem of pain and suffering ? Thirdly, our perplexities shape themselves to the utterance of this fundamental question—What is God's attitude to all this mass of misery and evil ? Does He care ? Instinctively we reject any creed which tells us that He does not care. No question is to-day more frequently asked throughout our land than this—Why does not God stop the war ? Is it that He does not care, or that He has not the power to stop it ? Many in this crisis have not been able to rise to the heights of a faith which can say with Job, " Though he slay me, yet will I trust him " ; and some, whose religion was not very deeply based, have lost their faith altogether. Now is the opportunity for the Christian teacher to point men to the Cross and to proclaim that, if any solution of the

problem is possible, it is to be found in Calvary. But it is not enough just to point to the fact that the one Perfect Life which the world has known was a life of suffering. That does not meet our difficulty. Nor is it enough to seek an answer to the question, Does God care? We want to know whether God is sharing our sorrows with us. Does the war hurt God? Is He present in the agony of the battle-field, Himself feeling it? I question if we can find satisfaction in any creed which tells us that God is not a sharer in human misery. Our ground for demanding that He shall suffer with us is our belief that the Divine Love once suffered the extreme of suffering on the Cross.

Lastly, though we may win an emotional satisfaction from the belief that God suffers with His creation, our faith, if it is to maintain itself in hours of trial, requires a yet deeper assurance. We want to be convinced that, though God suffers, He is yet victorious, and cannot undergo defeat. Is the Divine Love really omnipotent? Is the final reality, the ultimate ground of the universe, a Holy Love, which has the power to make righteousness emerge as the sovereign principle of history? What men are asking to-day is whether the world has broken away from the control of God. They are seeking for some objective reality on which their faith can base itself, some principle of righteousness, which is not a mere dream or vision, but a solid fact in

the spiritual realm. In a word, they are looking for a new assurance of God as eternally Righteous Love. They cannot rest content with any mere hope that all things are working out for a good end. They demand some objective ground to justify their passionate longing for the coming of a kingdom of heaven among men. And in their search they turn to the Cross of Christ. There, if anywhere, will their search be rewarded, for there they may see Love suffering yet triumphant, and the holiness of God asserting itself with power at a definite crisis in history. If the Cross of Jesus was an *act* of God, a manifestation on the field of time of a Personal Will expressing an unchanging character of righteousness and love, then there is rock beneath our feet. We can rest there. We can feel assured that He who could win that victory over sin and death can never be overcome by any hostile forces.[1]

The Bible has much to tell us which throws light upon these problems. Let us very briefly consider what it has to say about the fact of suffering.

We know how the problem of suffering exercised the Jewish mind in Old Testament times. Two main factors have here to be taken into

[1] *Cf.* Dr. Forsyth's article "The Reality of God: a War-time Question," in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1918. Among present-day writers Dr. Forsyth has taken a leading place in recalling our thoughts to the theology of the Atonement.

consideration. First, the Jew, at any rate till post-Exilic days, was without any clear conviction of personal immortality. Here and there a solitary thinker might rise to the hope of something better, but for the mass of the nation and their religious leaders the popular conception of Sheol, the underworld of ghosts, was all they had to hold to, as they faced what lay beyond death. The result of this negative creed was that they were without any assurance of judgment to come. Hence rewards and punishments could be looked for only in this life, and took the form of material prosperity or the reverse. The good man might reasonably expect to be blessed by God with health or riches or happiness. The bad man would find himself suddenly visited by some earthly calamity. But such a creed quickly broke down. Facts were against it; and in the Book of Job, or in such a Psalm as lxxiii, you see how the naive and simple belief of earlier days (strikingly illustrated in Psalm xxxvii) was feeling the pressure of the adverse facts. As reflection deepened, it became clear that some other solution of the problem of suffering must be found. The second factor to be taken into account is the living faith of the Jew in the Covenant God of his nation. God, he felt, stood to the Jewish people in a special relation. He had chosen them to be the channel of a divine revelation vouchsafed to no other nation. He was their God, bound to them by

the promises which He had made to their ancestors. They were selected for privilege, and the events of their national history were specially controlled to a divine end. A nation which believed this with conviction, as did the Jews, could not but be acutely perplexed by the problem of suffering. No nation in the world's history has ever suffered more. Why should they, the chosen race, thus suffer? Had God forgotten His ancient promises? Was He being untrue to the Covenant and to His own character? The acuteness of the problem of suffering was in proportion to the intensity of their faith in God.

Towards the close of the Exile it was given to one of their prophets to throw a new light upon this ancient problem. In Second Isaiah we have portrayed the picture of the Suffering Servant, who redeems his people by sharing with them their sorrows. The Suffering Servant represents the ideal Israel, the faithful "remnant," though through the picture we may surely hold that there shines the figure—shadowy and in outline, if you will—of a Personal Redeemer. This ideal Israel, suffering in exile, and to suffer in the future, had set before it the task of redeeming the nation as a whole, and through the nation the world at large, by sharing with the nation all the sadness of its lot. In sharing this sadness it was to prove how suffering could be transfigured and lifted out of darkness into glory. And the

transfiguration was to come about, not by the bringing in of some external happiness to counterbalance pain, but by showing how the very material of the pain, its shame, its sinfulness, its foulness, could be made the occasion for the manifestation of a triumphant Divine Love. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah l. 6). The patient bearing of an outrage or insult is often the very means by which he who commits the outrage is turned to a better mind. Love vindicates itself by quiet endurance. The heart of our Christian faith is that there is a Divine Love, which bears patiently all the pain which man puts upon it, waiting for man to turn. This is the love which redeems, which has healing virtue. It is the love of a "Servant," who by suffering serves.[1]

The Suffering Servant is the final answer of the Old Testament to the problem of suffering. What more does the New Testament add? It clothes the dim outline of the Personal Figure whom we saw appearing behind the picture of the Servant with flesh and blood. It shows us Jesus Christ taking upon Himself the rôle of the Servant, who redeems by sharing His people's

[1] *Cf.* Adam Smith's *Isaiah*, vol. ii. book iii. "The Servant of the Lord." Also ch. vi. in Scott Holland's *So as by Fire*, where the Biblical doctrine of suffering is sketched in a fresh and living way. I am indebted to this last for some suggestions.

sorrows and bearing the burden of their sins. In other words, God steps down into the scene of earth's misery, and Himself endures it; teaching us surely (unless we are content to rest in the false thought of the Atonement as an afterthought) that this is what He has always been doing. "God offers His own life, as the pledge that the evil can only be undone by the way of suffering and surrender." [1] Here we see at work the method of the Divine Love.

And has that method power? Some power it certainly has, otherwise there would be no story of Christianity. A work of redemption has been accomplished in the past, albeit slowly because of human sin. Christ uplifted has been drawing men to Himself. What of the future? Has not the war declared the impotence of God, and the bankruptcy of Christianity? We may meet that question by asking if Christianity has really been tried by the nations of the world. Can we say that the world, apart from individuals in it, has ever put into practice on a large scale this doctrine of conquering evil by way of suffering and surrender? If not, it is not Christianity which stands bankrupt, but only our profession of it. And to the question whether the war has not revealed the impotence of God we make answer that the Cross must be linked with the Resurrection, Ascension, and above all with Pentecost. Those three speak of power and

[1] Scott Holland, *op. cit.* p. 58.

final victory. They show that the seeming weakness of the Cross was really power, and give us the assurance which we need, that the Divine Love is a victorious and omnipotent Love. That Love is held back from exercising its complete sovereignty on earth, because by the very nature of the case it can be exercised only through the free co-operation of men. Every time we refuse to work with God we delay the coming of the perfect kingdom. But the kingdom is there. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, waits to descend from heaven. One day it will descend; one day Christ will take His power and reign.

"It is finished." The Cross is, in one sense, viewed in the light of God's eternal purpose, a complete and finished act of His love. In another sense it is an act which has only begun in time, and will not be finished until the patient love of God has driven out all sin from every human heart. How, or when, that consummation will come about we know not; but, if our religion is real, this we know, that it is both our duty and privilege to make ourselves channels for the flow of the Divine Love. The *via crucis*, the Way of the Cross, lies before us. It is for us to tread it, and in treading it we shall prove the reality and power of Him who "for us men and for our salvation" died that we might live.

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